

Everyday Pranayama For Everybody

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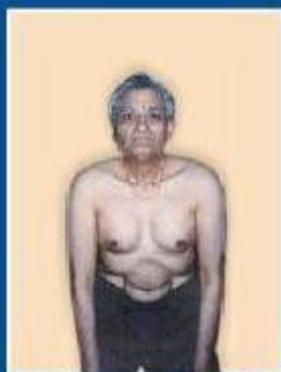
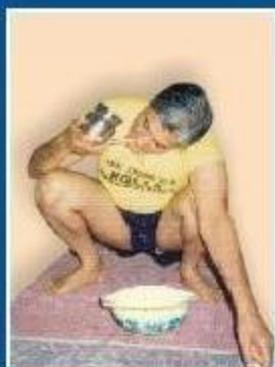
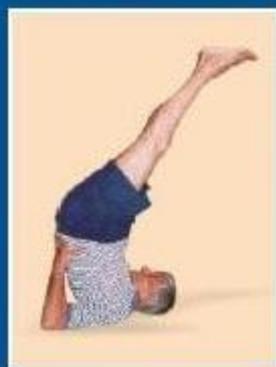
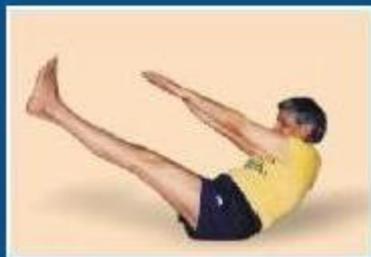
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Shamsheer Prakash

**EVERYDAY
PRANAYAMA
FOR
EVERYBODY**



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Rolla, MO, 65401

EVERYDAY PRANAYAMA FOR EVERYBODY

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DISCLAIMER

This book is meant to increase your knowledge of breathing exercise and to enhance your physical, mental and spiritual well-being. The information here is designed to help you make informed choices in “PRANAYAM and OTHER” practices. It is not intended as substitute for medical treatment. You should consult your doctor before you attempt the exercise described in this book.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Sri Sri ३००८ Sri Soami Vijaya Rajan Anand of the Himalayas, who has always been a friend, philosopher and mentor to me on the path of truth, whose philosophy and teachings have influenced every aspect of my life

&

Sally, my lovely wife, who supports my efforts in all aspects and Yoga Sadhana with dedication, love and understanding.

FOREWORD

Shamsher Prakash asked me to write a foreword for his book, “EVERYDAY PRANAYAM FOR EVERYBODY”. This is like holding a candle to mid-day sun! I have known Shamsher since childhood, for over sixty years. I admire his way of living and his strict principles of Yog-Sadhna.

He did his graduate studies in soil engineering in the USA and came to Reverend Mother and me in Shri Brindavan, Dehradun, Kasauli, Chail, and Roorkee. He became a seeker of spiritual truths and met hundreds of Yogis there.

When he was a Professor at Roorkee University, his home was like a “World Center” of Yoga and spiritual activities. Almost every Saint and Yogi visited him from 1957 to 1978. He has a very receptive mind; he learned all the practices of Yog-Sadhna and meditation techniques from every Saint and Yogi. He does not bind himself to any religion, cult or organization. He is a freelance Yogi. He remained a bachelor until 1980. In 1981, by the grace of Revered Mother, he married beautiful Shalini. She is beautiful both from within and outside.

She is very helpful to him in the advancement of Yog-Sadhna.

Shamsher is a great expert in Yoga. His aim throughout life remains to help humanity, especially the poor people of the world. He had the privilege of company in learning from persons like Damodar Satavlekar, Sri Guru Ji, Sri Mahesh Yogi, Jain acharya Sri Atma Ram Ji Maharaj, Sri Hanuman Dass Poddar, Sri Daya Maa, Shri Dhirendra Brahamchari, Sri Yogendra Ji, Sri Charan Singh Ji, Sri Swami Hari Tirath Ji, Sri Shehanshah Ji Maharaj, Sri Anand Mayee Maa, Swami Shivananda, Sant Kripal Singh Ji, Sri Sushil Muni Ji and Sri Yoga-Charya Lall Ji, and many others. All these people have blessed him. His life was certainly reformed after meeting and talking to Mother Teresa.

His new book on PRANAYAM is yet a milestone in his writings on Yog-Sadhna; it is in reality an excellent text for the beginners. As a Saint, I have met thousands of Saints and Yogis in India and around the world, but Shamsher is the householder Yogi. His main purpose in life is service to the humanity. He has given many scholarships and assistance programs, and donations of

his hard-earned money. This book is not the end; it is the best beginning for guidance in PRANAYAM.

I will conclude with a small anecdote. Shamsheer is an international expert in soil engineering also.

Therefore, his well meaning friends used to call him an *Expert, from Soil Mechanics to Soul Mechanics*.

May the Lord bless you in your truthful pursuits.

Soami Vijaya Rajan Anand

The Himalayas
December 25, 2005

PREFACE

Humanity is suffering from many ills generated by itself. We are living under stresses and strains on our minds as well as on our bodies, strains and stresses which are not necessary and which are avoidable.

In the modern world, we create problems and try to find solutions. We have created a very unhealthy, unnatural and artificial environment. Every day we create new problems for ourselves individually, in society, throughout the whole nation and the whole world. Then we spend all our efforts to find solutions for these problems. This is a never-ending process: creating problems, finding solutions.

It is time to sit down and try to see what is wrong with us, individually as well as collectively, what is wrong with the way we live, and find its remedy.

Let me give you a description of what I mean by problems. Human existence is on three distinct but interrelated planes, the *physical, mental and spiritual*. As soon as we separate one from the other, we create a problem and make a mistake in finding a solution; we are on wrong track. For example, we want to live luxuriously so that we may have comfort. We try to generate more resources for ourselves and in that

process we lose sight of our state of mind. We lose sight of a calm and stress-free mind. We may not find any time to pray to God, thank the Almighty for the things He has given us or just sing praises to the Lord without any specific purpose, for creating this universe for us. Once we experience stress, then we want to find a solution for stress. We never try to find why stress has come into our lives. Therefore we have to examine and do some introspection in our lives. Hopefully, in examination, introspection, and understanding of the problem lies the solution.

Coming back to the fact that our existence is on three distinct planes, physical, mental and spiritual, one cannot be separated from the other without sacrificing *quality of life*. When we say *quality of life*, what do we mean? Does it mean living in a very comfortable environment, getting a very handsome salary and living with a stressed mind? Or getting enough comfort physically for living, having peace of mind and praying to God, singing praise to the Almighty? Do we sing praise to the Almighty only in church, not in our homes every day?

These are some questions which we don't take time to address. Maybe we don't find the need for it. Maybe we have not considered that these are the questions needing investigation.

We have tried to explore and reform the whole world. We have explored outer space, the moon, the mars, new continents, the Antarctica, but we have not explored our minds! What is in our minds? Our minds are full of jumbled thoughts, stress, worry, fear, ambition, and jealousy. What are we going to do with this mind that is full of so many things which do not bring *peace* to the mind?

These questions need to be investigated. We look for an isolated solution to stress or to problems in our mind or body. For spiritual happiness, we must investigate our mind. There is a need for us to examine and try to understand our thought process, our state of mind.

In my text on 'Prevention and Yoga', I have shown how to prevent physical ailments in our bodies, how to have a completely disease-free body. This appears to be a tall order, but by prevention we can attain it. I don't think we can attain it by cures (medicines!).

What do we want to prevent? Take constipation, irregular bowel movements. The doctor may say it is not a problem. But when we eat every day, why don't we clear our bowels every day?

That sounds logical to me; why should it not sound

logical to you? There is certainly a problem with constipation.

Adults should never have a *common cold*. We have given this problem with the nose and our sinuses a very lovely name, *common cold*. This is not right; it should be *uncommon cold*. Why do you get a cold? We waste millions of hours and billions of dollars for relief of the common cold and problems related to: it. We should find a way to eliminate the common cold from the system completely. Prevention - not cure! We hear so many ads on TV, e.g. Tavist-D, Benadryl and Tylenol sinus, and Allegra. These are high-powered medicines with or without prescription. You pay a few dollars; and one tablet, they say, works for 12 hours. How about after that? Why not go for prevention of the common cold completely!

These are some of the small problems which start-appearing in the body slowly, i.e. constipation, common cold, headache and allergies. Allergies are a widespread health problem. Anything we don't completely understand cause and cure — is called an *allergy*. About 40 million Americans suffer from allergies¹. We get Common Cold 1 billion times a year¹.

¹ 1994-SP Foundation

Allergy is caused in the body by foreign deposits which are injurious to us. We have to keep the system clean and not let deposits build up.

A disease-free body is the first requirement of happy living.

The mind is in a jumbled state. Therefore we have to understand the mind to be aware and alert all the time as to what enters the mind. Our mind should be free from fear. Once we have achieved a disease-free body and a clear mind, we can strive for spiritual uplift. This gives a state of mind which is ever alert, ever light, free from worry, free from stress. Everyone has experienced this state of mind momentarily and these are the moments we cherish. If we had this state of mind all the time, how nice it would be! Some people say it would be boring. They have no idea of an *ecstatic state* of mind; they don't even appreciate it verbally and mentally. This is a state of mind of supreme happiness, supreme ecstasy (*Parmanand*). That is what we should strive to attain and then do our work very efficiently.

In this text, I have discussed PRANAYAMA, the science of breathing. Asanas including physical fitness and meditation including stress relief will be included in separate texts.

This book was written for the householder, a busy person, a person under pressure of time constraint, who needs guidance. The style is simple as are the breathing exercises which I have practiced myself. I have done them all and gotten the benefit of them. Over the past 27 years, I have taught these exercises to my students in the USA, India and other places; they have also benefited from them.

This text was developed from lecture notes on my classes on Yoga and Prevention and will be used in future classes. Readers are invited to share their experience and ask questions.

Dr. Malti Sen (Gosh) & Sri Usha Mata ji provided a write-up on Bandhas and Anulom-vilom. Shalini offered useful comments on the text. It was typed with painstaking effort by Shraddha Naik, Vishal Sadana and Radhika Nagane. Cover & all other layout is designed by Som Agnihotri. All help is acknowledged.

May the Lord bless you with a healthy body and ecstatic mind.

January 3, 2006

Shamsher Prakash

INTRODUCTION²

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is an old saying. It seems to have lost its meaning in the present-day world where we have time for *falling ill, hospitalization and visits to the doctor*. But we have no time for leisurely walks, we have no time to listen to the morning bird's sing, no time just to stand and stare, and no time for age old YOGA.

Today 48% of adults in family households are taking prescription drugs — 82% for a long-term condition and 26% for a short-term condition (*Reader's Digest*). Family Index is a measure of overall well-being of the American family, conducted with the Gallup Organization. We're dedicated to our statins, painkillers and antidepressants (RD 08/05). Most of it can be avoided by suitable prevention and yoga.

Our attitudes, thinking and approach to life have taken such an *about face* that we have accepted stress, small ailments of the body and a distressed mind as normal. If we fall ill, the doctor is there to prescribe

² Adapted from PREVENTION AND YOGA by Shamsher Prakash (SP Foundation), Rolla MO 1994

medicine; the insurance company is there to take care of the costs. We have forgotten that *'An apple a day keeps the doctor away'*. Also, we have forgotten *Early to bed, early to rise makes a man (or woman) healthy, wealthy and wise.*

Do not worry. I am not asking you to change your life-style. I am not asking you to go back to the times we consider *backward*. But in this modern age when technology has made life pleasurable, are we any happier than before? This is an important question.

We want *to be* happy. No, we want to become happy. There is a difference. We are not happy now. We want to become happy *after some time, in some future time, after we have done this, after we have done that, after we have earned a million dollars!*

We have to learn that happiness is beyond time. The time to be happy is *NOW!* The place to be happy is *HERE!* We have to learn that happiness is not necessarily related to our material success and material possessions. If wealth, a palace and fancy cars were to make a person happy, then the rich and famous must be the happiest people on earth!

Who has not heard of Earnest Hemingway, the American writer and Nobel Prize winner in literature? He had great success. To the man in the street, he should have been the happiest person in the world! Alas, he suffered from hypertension and died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Marilyn Monroe, dream girl of Hollywood, was gorgeous and successful with fans everywhere. She is regarded as one of the greatest stars ever in Hollywood. She is said to have been close to President John F. Kennedy and presidential hopeful Robert F. Kennedy. More than a dozen books were written about her after her death in 1962. Her calendars and pictures sell in large numbers even today, about 45 years after her death. Her personal artifacts were auctioned for millions of dollars (2005). She could not enjoy good sleep and used to take sleeping pills. She used to lament that she did not have true love in her life. Empty bottles of sleeping pills were found near her bed after her death!

Elizabeth Taylor, Academy Award winner, and Ted Turner, media mogul, are said to have battled drugs.

Guru Dutt, one of the most successful actors, producers and directors of Bollywood (India), who produced hits like “Pyasa”, did not have love in his life and died after taking an overdose of sleeping pills. The list goes on.

In 2005, Michael Jackson, one of the most celebrated pop stars, has been involved in a controversy. He was allegedly under treatment for drug addiction in England and was charged by young boys in California for sexual molestation more than once. These incidents cost him close to 300 million dollars.

I am trying to bring to your attention *lifestyles of the rich and famous*, people who are distressed. What did they lack? Money, name, fame, success? No! What was missing from their lives which placed them in such a pitiful condition? *Peace of mind and a balance of material and spiritual living* were missing. Balanced human existence is on three planes: physical, mental and spiritual. Only a balance of the three will make us truly successful and happy.

As mentioned earlier, happiness is beyond time. Therefore we should be happy all the time. This is

supreme ecstasy (*Paramanand*).

On the physical plane, we should be free from body ailments: common cold, sinus, headache, cough, sinusitis, and constipation. We must learn techniques to keep our bodies free of these maladies. Then chances are we will not suffer chronic ailments. On a mental plane, our mind is occupied by thoughts that lead to worry. We must learn to be free from worry.

A stress-free mind is ready to meditate. Meditation brings *ecstasy*, eternal happiness, eternal joy, the happiness and joy which have no opposite.

In this text PRANAYAM, the techniques of breathing will be described. It is necessary that an elementary description of Ashtang yoga is introduced first.

ASHTANG YOGA

Yoga is a household word today. It has become fashionable to display some knowledge of Yoga, particularly among the elite. Yoga is mentioned every day on radio and television as an alternative to mainstream medicine and healing of ailments. Health, beauty and Teen's journals seem to be competing with each other to recommend breathing and meditation for relief of stress. Meditation is presented as a treatment for stress, worry and cardiac problems in general books on health and sometimes in medical texts as well.

Popular terminology associated with Yoga, includes HATH YOGA, KRIYA YOGA, TANTRA YOGA, SIDH YOGA, TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION YOGA, TIBETAN YOGA, VIPASANA, "HOT" YOGA, SUDARSHAN KRIYA YOGA, CHRISTIAN YOGA, and MINDFUL YOGA. Sometimes a particular Yoga is claimed to get quick results. Such description makes an interesting story only!

In ancient times, people lived closer to nature than present-day living permits. They observed their environment in the minutest detail; they observed animals and birds. Also they observed human beings

and their own minds in great detail. Sheer observation of nature over a period of time with a *receptive mind* led to the discovery that amongst other things, the key to good health is *alternate stretching and relaxation of the human body*.

Furthermore, a healthy system depends on a body free from dirt and residue after digestion. Therefore, a bowel movement must be daily and preferably first thing in the morning. Irregularity in bowel movements is the beginning of several body ailments. But this fact is not recognized by modern physiology and medicine. It is a pity!

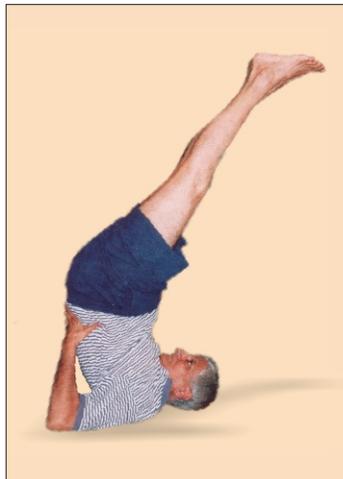


Figure 1
Sarvang Asana

By sheer observation, it had also been determined that the *thyroid* is a vital gland in the human body, before the modern discovery of glands and that SARVANG ASANA is the posture that tones the whole body, since it tones the thyroid (Figure 1).

In prehistoric times, knowledge was passed from father to son, mother to daughter and from the teacher to the taught. Rishi Patanjali prepared a comprehensive treatise on *Ashtang* Yoga called the “PATANJALI'S YOGA DARSHANA SUTRAS”. According to him, there are eight steps (Ashtang) in the performance of Yoga.

These are:

1. YAMA (Social Discipline)
2. NIYAMA (Individual Discipline)
3. ASANA (Body Posture)
4. PRANAYAMA (Control and Regulation of Breath and Vital Force “Prana”)
5. PRATYAHARA (Discipline of Senses)
6. DHARNA (Concentration)
7. DHAYANA (Contemplation)
8. SAMADHI (Merger Ecstasy)

The third step is *Asana*, literally meaning *posture*. Asanas are essentially performed while (1) standing, (2) sitting, and (3) lying down. These postures have been devised (1) to keep the spinal cord supple, e.g. alternate bending of the spine as in Bhujang Asana (cobra) (Figure 2.) and Nauka Asana (boat)(Figure 3.); (2) to help strengthen abdominal muscles, e.g. Udiyaan or Neoli (Figure 4.), a simple pumping of the stomach; and (3) to keep the joints supple.



Figure 2
Bhujang Asana

Another important factor in Asanas is the absence of tension or fatigue in the body. It is recommended that *Asanas* be performed after a bath, when the body is clean and the stomach empty. Any solid food should be taken no sooner than 30 minutes after these exercises or four hours before them.

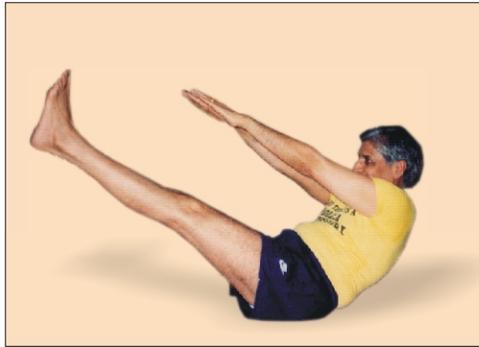


Figure 3
Nauka Asana

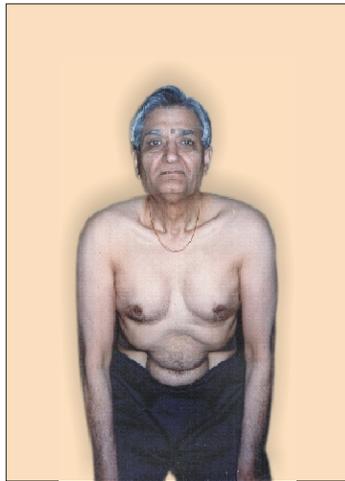


Figure 4
Udiyaan or Neoli

The fourth step in Patanjali's Yoga is Pranayama. PRANAYAMA literally means regulation of breath. This should not be interpreted only as physical. Advantages of Pranayama are manifold while fresh air is inhaled and foul air is exhaled in a regulated manner. The breath literally acts as a carrier of vital force or *prana*. It may be difficult to appreciate the existence and importance of *prana* at first. An analogy will clarify the situation.

If we examine a sample of water from a flowing river, a static pond or behind a high dam, the water always consists chemically of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. In the same manner, the air that we breathe normally or through several regulated procedures of Pranayama consists of nitrogen, oxygen and other gases. However, the water stored behind a dam has considerable amount of potential energy which cannot be seen but can be harnessed by regulating flow through a powerhouse. Similarly, *pranic* energy is inhaled along with the breath by means of regulated techniques. The proof of the pudding is in the eating! A few days of practice of Pranayama will generate new energy in the system.

PRANAYAMA

Meaning of Pranayama:

'Pranayama' literally means 'to expand Prana' (vital force). Pranayama is a process in which respiration is interrupted and Prana, that is, the vital force is controlled and regulated. The purpose of Pranayama is to inspire, motivate, regulate and balance the vital force (Prana) pervading in the body.

Importance of Pranayama:

Pranayama is the fourth and very important stage of Ashtanga Yoga of Rishi Patanjali. Yoga without Pranayama is not Yoga at all. That is why Pranayama is called the soul of Yoga. As a bath is necessary for purifying the body, similarly, Pranayama is essential for purifying the mind.

Advantages:

- (1) Pranayama keeps the body fit and healthy. It reduces excessive fat.
- (2) One can live a long life through Pranayama. Pranayama improves the power of memory and eliminates mental disorders.
- (3) Pranayama tones up the stomach, the liver, the bladder, the small and the large intestines and the

digestive system, purifies tubular channels and removes sluggishness from the body, and kindles gastric fire; the body becomes healthy and the inner voice begins to be heard.

- (4) Constant practice of Pranayama strengthens the nervous system. The mind becomes calm and capable of concentration, and rouses spiritual power.
- (5) Most importantly negative thinking comes to an end. The person practicing Pranayama is always full of positive thoughts.

Prerequisites:

Pranayama should be practiced

- (a) In the early morning or in the evening.
- (b) Sitting on the floor. The postures suitable are Vajrasana, Padmasana, Siddhasana, or Sukhasana. (In the beginning you may sit erect on a chair. Keep the spine fully vertical and stretched.)
- (c) At the same time regularly on empty stomach, a small cup of milk may be taken but not solid food.
- (d) Do not take bath immediately after the practice of Pranayama. Rest for half an hour before taking bath.

Important steps in Pranayama:

It is necessary to understand and grasp certain important steps of Pranayama which include:

- (1) (Puraka) Inhaling, (Kumbhaka) Retention of the breath and (Rechaka) Exhaling.
Puraka means to inhale. Kumbhaka means to retain the breath. Rechaka means to exhale.
- (2) Three Bandhas (Locks) i.e. Jalandar Bandha, Uddiyana Bandha, and Mula Bandha.
- (3) Bahya (External) Kumbhaka means retention of breath after exhalation.
- (4) Antarika (Internal) Kumbhaka means retention of breath following inhalation.

Sitting Posture in Pranayama:

While conducting Pranayama, the spine should be erect. You can sit in any posture related with 'Dhyan' just as Sidhasana, Padmasana, Sukharana and Vajrasana etc. If you are not in a position to sit in any of those asanas in the beginning, you may sit on a chair for Pranayama. You will keep your spine erect, vertical, and stretched.

THE SEVEN PROCESSES OF PRANAYAMA

Although the different ways of 'Pranayama' are mentioned in our Shastras (Books on Hindu Dharma³) and every Pranayama has its own importance, yet one cannot practice all kinds of Pranayama daily. So all the processes of Pranayama have been assembled into seven steps which are systematic and time bound spiritually psychologically, physically and scientifically; these have passed the test of experiments and gave a logical result⁴.

These are:

1. Bhastrika,
2. Kapalbhata
3. Anulom-Vilom
4. Bhramri
5. Ujjai
6. Shetalee
7. Mahabandha

However, for a beginner, we have included four of these seven techniques here i.e. 1, 2, 3 and 7. It takes about 20 minutes in going through this complete process of Pranayama. The four techniques are now described.

³Dharama is not religion.

⁴Science of Pranayama by Sri Ram Dev, (IN HINDI)

1. BHASTRIKA PRANAYAMA

Sit in a meditative posture at ease. Filling the lungs with breath through nostrils and throwing it out with full force is called Bhastrika Pranayama. The abdominal cavity moves like a balloon in Bhastrika. This Pranayama can be practiced in three stages according to one's own capacity i.e. slow, medium and fast. Those with weak lungs and heart should go slow by exhaling slowly. A healthy and old practitioner may gradually proceed with the process at medium pace and then fast. It may be practiced for 3 to 5 minutes.

In Bhastrika Pranayama while inhaling breath one should fulfill his mind with the thinking that all pervading cosmic power and the celestial energy, peace, bliss and whatever is pure and chaste is pouring in me with pran. I am being engulfed by the cosmic power.

Special Warnings

- (1) Patients of Asthma should not practice it.
- (2) The persons suffering from high blood pressure and heart problems should do only slow Bhastrika and *under the care of a specialist*.

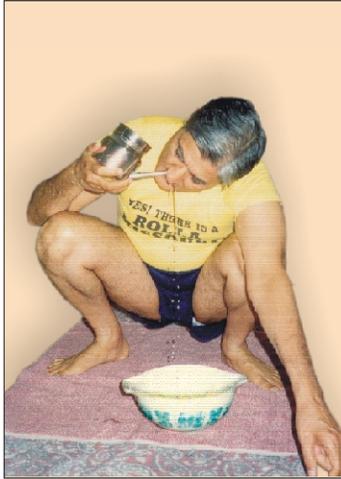


Figure 5
Jalaneti

- (3) Persons with common cold and sinus infection and clogged nostrils should first clear their nasal passage with *Jalaneti*. (Figure 5.)
- (4) While practicing Pranayama process the eyes should be closed and with every breath either inhaling or exhaling should be mingled with the thought of 'OM'.

2. KAPALABHATI PRANAYAMA

Kapala means brain and *Bhati* means shine (Enlightenment of the intellect); the process which leads to enhance the shining of the face and mind is called *Kapalabhati* Pranayama. It slightly varies from the

process of 'Bhastrika' Pranayama. In Bhastrika Pranayama equal force is applied on inhaling and exhaling whereas in Kapalabhati, maximum pressure is applied on exhaling the breath. An effort to inhale is not forcefully done but it is observed in a normal way. Full concentration is applied to exhaling of the breath. In this Pranayama, deflation and inflation of the belly takes place automatically. Start with 20-50 breaths first and then increase practice. Normally 30-35 breath per minute is good speed.

While doing Kapalabhati Pranayama, one should think that all ailments of my mind and body are exiting with this exhaling and are getting destroyed. Exhaling should be with the thought that I am releasing all my physical diseases and mental ailments like kama, krodh, lobh, moh, ahankar (attachments) and enmity and jealousy. This will generate positive thoughts in the mind throughout.

3. ANULOMA-VILOMA

Viloma means produced in the reverse order. This pranayam gets its name from the fact that the order of breathing through the nostrils for inhalation and exhalation is reversed every time.

- (1) Close the right nostril with the right thumb, and inhale through the left nostril (Figure 6) right thumb, Step 1.

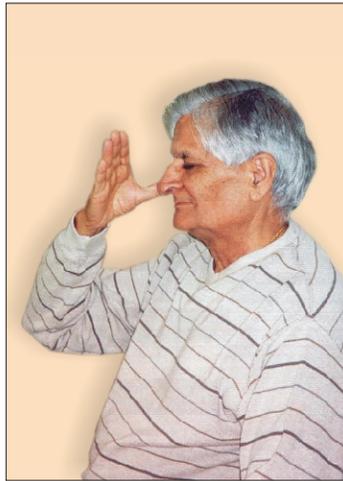


Figure 6
Anuloma-Viloma; Step 1
Close the right nostril with right thumb

- (2) Now release the right nostril and close the left nostril with the index finger of right hand and exhale through the right nostril.
- (3) Holding the left nostril still closed as above, inhale through the right nostril (Figure 7).
- (4) Now release the left nostril and close the right nostril with the right thumb as in (1) above, but exhale through the left nostril, and



Figure 7
Anuloma-Viloma; Step 2
Close the left nostril with right index finger

- (5) Still holding the right nostril with the right, inhale through the left nostril as in (1) above

This is one round. You may start with 5- rounds and practice this Pranayama for about 3-5 minutes.

Pranayama is a process of regulation of the breath resulting in silencing the mind. Even a few rounds of Pranayama of moderate measure properly practiced can give you an experience of peace of mind.

One very conspicuous characteristic of human

mind is that it always wanders from thought to another, knowing no rest at any one time except, may be in sleep. Even in sleep, we may experience dreams. Much of this is simply a wasteful activity which, if minimized, could help the mind to function in a far better and useful way. This can be achieved through Pranayama. The mind may be attached to the flow of air during puraka and rechaka in the beginning. During Kumbhaka the mind should also be motionless, not remembering any past incident, not thinking about the future, not uttering any word or visualizing any image. With a little practice one can start enjoying such a silent, detached state of mind giving rest to it. It is a state of deep concentration (DHARNA) in which the tensions and conflicts which always disturb the mind are not working. One should attain such a peaceful state of mind while doing Pranayama⁵.

4. MAHABANDHA PRANAYAMA (with the Bandha trio)

(a) Bahya Mahabandha

Sitting in either Vajrasana, Sidhasana or in Padmasana exhale to capacity. Hold the breath out and apply the three 'Bandhas'. When there is a need to take

⁵YOGIC PRANAYAMA - K.S. Joshi Orient Sahar Book, Bombay 1990

breath, first remove three bandhas, and breathe in slowly. Repeat this process three to 21 times. This is called Bahya (extrovert) Mahabandha Pranayama.

In this Pranayama also, like Kapalabhati all negative thoughts are pushed out while exhaling. All problems and ailments will be over to the extent of one's determination and resolute thinking. The divine thoughts in the mind are annihilator of any kind of physical and mental diseases.

(b) Antrik Mahabandha

Sit in a meditative posture and take a long breath in, hold and apply the three bandhas as in Bahya Mahabandha. The only difference in Bahya and Antrik Mahabandha is that in the former we exhale, hold and then apply the 3- bandhas, while in Antrik Mahabandha, we inhale, hold and then apply the 3- bandhas (Mahabandha).

This is complimentary to Bahya Mahabandha and the two make one round of Mahabandha Pranayama.

Bandhas will now be described.

BANDHAS

Bandhas itself means blockage or stoppage. We, put a lock (block) to that outgoing energy (Aura) of the body and organs to which we utilize for our inner body through Pranayama. These Bandhas are extremely beneficial in Pranayama.

There are three Bandhas (Blocks).

JALANDHAR BANDHA

By sitting erect in Vajrasana, Padmasana or Sidhasana, take a long breath out and hold. Put both of the hands on knees and lower your chin towards the 'kanthakula' (hollow in the throat). This posture is known as 'Jalandhar Bandha'. This Bandha blocks the network of the throat (Figure 8).



Figure 8
Jalandhar Bandha

The parts around the throat including the thyroid gland are pressed in this bandha; the back portion of the neck is stretched. An upward pull is exercised on the spine. This bandha is not to be applied during puraka or rechaka.

This bandha should always accompany Kumbhaka, Bahya or Antrik.

Benefits

- (1) This Bandha leads to sweet, soft and musical throat.
- (2) It is a healer of almost all the throat problems and very much beneficial for Thyroid and Tonsil like problems.

UDDIYAN BANDHA

In this bandha, the thoracic diaphragm is moved to an extreme upward position. The wall of the abdomen is pulled towards the back giving a concave appearance like the bottom surface of a pond. That is usually done after an exhalation so that the depression in the wall of the abdomen looks quite pronounced (Figure 4). When it is done while holding the breath in, during Pranayama the concavity is not so well marked because the diaphragm does not rise high in the thoracic cavity since the lungs are already filled with air .

Benefits

This bandha provides a very good exercise to the abdominal viscera by causing pressure and stretch on them. This helps to remove congestion and promote

blood circulation. While doing it in Pranayama after a puraka, a stretch and pressure is developed in both the thoracic and abdominal cavities.

MOOLBANDHA

Moola means the root. Moolabandha is the contraction of the anal sphincters and the pelvic floor. While in Uddiyanabandha one sucks the belly in, the lower abdomen is also slightly contracted. This contraction is completed by contracting the anal sphincters. Thus Uddiyanabandha and Moolabandha usually go together.

Either by sitting in Vajrasana, Sidhasana or Padmasana, take a long breath out and hold. Pull both the anus and the penis upward, the lower part of the navel will automatically be stretched upward.

Benefits

- (1) This Bandha heals constipation and piles, and stimulates the system.
- (2) It provokes the semen to travel upward and is most important for the maintenance of celibacy.

COMMENTS

What do the bandhas bind actually? Physically they bind particular muscles and hold them tightly in position for some time. But that is not all. In yoga the bandhas are applied mainly for binding the prana. This is a special purpose for which Pranayama is practiced, and the bandhas help it greatly. The prana is bound by

them, made to have an impact on the kundalini, causing it to be awakened.

It should be remembered that when Pranayama is practiced along with the bandhas, you should be careful to watch your capacity and never to exceed it. Holding the breath and creating internal pressure and stretch, one is modifying the normal process of breathing very considerably. A slight mistake at this stage may be harmful. It is therefore necessary that both Pranayama and particularly the Bandhas should be practiced under the supervision of a specialist.

MAHABANDHA

By sitting in any concentrative asana like Vajrasana, Padmasana, Sidhasana or Sukhasana, applying all the three Bandhas at the same time is known as 'Mahabandha'.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The proof the pudding is in eating. Nobody can make you feel its taste. One can only teach a technique to make it. Similarly, after you have understood and learnt the techniques of Pranayama and Bandhas, you have to practice to get their advantages.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU.

News

February 21, 2006

Dr. Shamsheer Prakash has been appointed HONORARY EDITOR of International Journal of Case Histories in Geomechanics. He has also been designated a Member of the International Commission on Case Histories of the ISSMGE.

Dr. Prakash was invited to make a panel presentation at the 16th International Conference on Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering, OSAKA, Japan (09/05), on "Design of Footings During Earthquakes". He was also invited to make a key note presentation on "CONSIDERATION IN DESIGN OF SHALLOW AND DEEP FOUNDATIONS DURING EARTHQUAKES" to the Indian Geotechnical Conference, Ahmedabad (INDIA) (12/05).

Dr. Shamsheer Prakash has been designated Chairman, Sixth International Conference on Case Histories in Geotechnical Engineering, Washington DC, August 2008.

Professor Shamsheer Prakash was felicitated at the International Conference on Yoga and Natural Therapy, Lucknow (INDIA) on November 30, 2005 for his contribution to 'HEALING THROUGH YOGA' and Lectures on YOGA "PHILOSOPHY" worldwide.

About the Author



Dr. Shamsheer Prakash was born January 3, 1933 in India. His early education was in Punjab. He earned a bachelor's degree in engineering from Roorkee University as well as an M.S. and Ph.D. in civil engineering from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Dr. Prakash is an international expert on soil dynamics and earthquake engineering. He has published three books in India and four books in the USA as well as over 200 technical papers. After retirement as a professor of civil engineering in India, Dr. Prakash joined the University of Missouri-Rolla faculty.

Dr. Prakash took his early training in Yoga at home and at the church he attended in India. A serious interest in Yoga developed after his return to India upon completion of graduate studies in 1962. He devoted his efforts to learning everything possible about Yoga practices and philosophy from every teacher he could find during years 1962 through 1978.

Dr. Prakash has developed a unique program of Pranayam, which is the central theme of this text.

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