

## IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF PRĀṆĀYĀMA

The control (āyāma) of prāṇa (breath) is prāṇāyāma. All the actions of our body are directly or indirectly connected with prāṇa. The unbreakable link of life and death with each individual all the time coincides with prāṇa only. In Sanskrit, the word 'jīvana' is derived from vjiva (prāṇa dhāraṇe), and the word 'mṛtyu' is derived from vṃṛṇ (prāṇatyāge). Our Vedas, scriptures and Upaniṣads sing the eternal glory of prāṇa to no end. Atharvaveda says: **prāṇāpānau mṛtyormā pāta svāhā**. 'May both prāṇa and apāna protect me from death.' Here is what Manu says about prāṇāyāma:

**dahyante dhṃyāmānānām dhātūnām hi yathā malāḥ /  
tathendriyāṇām dahyante doṣāḥ prāṇasya nigrahāt //**  
(MANU : 6.71)

“As the dross matter, impurities of metals like gold, etc. are destroyed when they are heated in fire, similarly flaws of senses and mind are also dispelled by prāṇāyāma.” Hathayogapradīpikā says:

**prāṇāyāmaireva sarve praśuṣyanti malā iti /  
ācāryāṇāntu keṣāñcidanyat karma na sammatam //**  
(HA. PRA : 2.38)

There is no activity more noteworthy than pranayama for the removal of obstructions to waste expulsion. By doing the various pranayamas, all the dross matter of the body, mind & senses dries up.

**āsanena rujaṃ hanti prāṇāyāmena pātakam /  
vikāraṃ mānaṣaṃ yogī pratyāhāreṇa muñcati //**  
(YOGACŪDĀMAṆYUPANIṢAD 109)

A yogi dispels rajoguṇa (flippancy) by āsana, pāpa (sins) by prāṇāyāma and mental disorders by pratyāhāra (withdrawal).

**cale vāte calaṃ cittaṃ niścale niścalaṃ bhavet.**  
(HA. PRA.: 2.2)

There is an intimate relation between prāṇa and mind. With the stabilization of prāṇa, the mind concentrates automatically.

Yogadarśana also says : **tataḥ kṣiyate prakāśāvaraṇaṃ; dhāraṇāsu  
ca yogyatā manasaḥ.** (YOGADARŚANA 2.52,53)

By practising prāṇāyāma, the screen of darkness of evil, ignorance and misery covering the mind decays. In the purged and purified mind, dhāraṇā (concentration) takes place automatically, and with the help of concentration one moves ahead toward dhyāna (meditation) and samādhi (absorption), the sublime states of yoga.

**gītādhyayanaśīlasya prāṇāyāmaparasya ca /  
naiva santi hi pāpāni pūrvajanmakṛtāni ca //**

“By studying the sacred text Gītā and by practising prāṇāyāma regularly the evil impressions (sins) of the previous birth accumulated in the mind are destroyed”.

By yogāsanas we correct the disorders of the gross body. Prāṇāyāma impacts the subtle body more than the yogāsanas, and it is not only the subtle body but also the gross body that is directly and obviously influenced by prāṇāyāma. Lungs, heart and brain play a very important role in our body, and the healthiness of these three is intimately linked with one another.

Broadly speaking, prāṇāyāma is a procedure of the exercise of inhaling and exhaling which makes the lungs strong, and gets the benefit of overall health and long life with the improvement in blood circulation. According to physiology, both the lungs in human beings are the apparatuses of inhaling, and the air inhaled in them gives oxygen to the whole body, and throws the carbonic gas out of various organs. If this action goes on properly, the lungs get strong and blood continues to be purified.

Generally most people are not used to breathing deeply. As a result, only about a quarter part of the lungs functions and the remaining three quarters remain almost idle. Like a honeycomb (beehive) the lungs have about 7,30,00,000 sponge-like cells (alveoli). In normal light breathing the prāṇa-vāyu circulates in about 20 million alveoli, the rest 53 million of them remain idle for want of circulation of prāṇa-vāyu. As a result they develop inertia and impurities and foreign matter starts depositing in them, and a person falls prey to deadly diseases, like tuberculosis, cough, bronchitis, etc.

Thus, the incomplete (fractional) activity of lungs influences the purification and circulation of blood. Mental disorders like agitation, anxiety, despondency, anger, fear, lasciviousness, etc. can be successfully treated with prāṇāyāma. Along with mental

efficiency one can improve one's memory, sharpness, common sense, farsightedness, minute observation, concentration, intellect, etc. through prāṇāyāma, and thereby enjoy a long and really happy life. Thus, prāṇāyāma becomes extremely important for the longevity of a person. Various diseases can be warded off easily by regulating the prāṇa-vāyu through prāṇāyāma. With the knowledge of this science, i.e. the science of prāṇa-vāyu, a person can regulate his own health as well as of others and can increase his longevity by benefitting fully from a happy and blissful life. That is why our age-old religion includes prāṇāyāma as an essential ritual on auspicious occasions and in the morning-evening meditative prayers. By doing prāṇāyāma we start breathing long and deep instinctively. In the life granted us by God, we have been given counted number of breaths or prāṇas. A person gets his next birth according to his deeds.

**sati mūle tadvipāko jātyāyurbhogāḥ.**

**(YOGADARŚANA: 2.13)**

As a result of his meritorious or non-meritorious deeds a person qualifies for his birth as a human being, an animal, an insect, etc., for his longevity, for his enjoyments. One who practices prāṇāyāma uses fewer breaths, and has therefore a long life. Otherwise also, in this universe the creatures taking fewer breaths live proportionately longer.

The speed of breathing of a creature is a determining factor in its longevity, which is quite obvious to us. A turtle normally takes 4-5 breaths in a minute and it lives for 200-400 years. A human being normally takes 12-18 breaths, averaging 16 breaths in a minute. In the course of gaining control of breath through prāṇāyāma, although in bhastrikā, kapālabhāti, anuloma- viloma, etc. the number of breaths gets fewer or more at the time of prāṇāyāma, but after prāṇāyāma, all the day long there is a rhythm and stability in breaths. Therefore, in the earlier stage a yoga practitioner starts breathing 8-10 times per minute, which after a long practice comes down to 4-6 per minute. When a normal person takes 16 breaths per minute on an average, his average longevity is about 100 years. A normal person takes 23,040 (roughly 24,000) breaths in one day in 24 hours, whereas a yogi takes 6000 breaths in one day (24 hours). When with the normal 16

breaths per minute a person lives for 100 years, the full longevity of a yoga practitioner with his breathing rate of 4 per minute goes up to 400 years. According to scriptures and seers-sages, the maximum life-span of a man is 400 years. In the beginning the practitioner of yoga takes 8 breaths per minute which comes down to 4 with the regular practice of prāṇāyāma and meditation. Therefore, a yogi can achieve the long life of 400 years. This is the secret of the longevity of ṛṣis. As the Manusmṛti says:

**ṛṣayo dīrghasandhyatvād dīrghamāyuravāpnuyuh /  
prajñān̄m yaśāśca kīrtiṁ ca brahmavarcasameva ca //**

"Ṛṣis achieved a long life by doing sandhyā (proper meditation) for long hours daily. Along with this they were also able to achieve intellect, fame, glory and divine radiance (brahmateja)."

How beautiful is this observation in Caraka Samhitā on the greatness of prāṇa:

**vayustantrayantradharah, pravartakaśceṣṭānāmuccāvā-  
cānām,  
niyantā praṇetā ca manasaḥ, sarvendriyāṇāmudyojakaḥ,  
sarvendriyārthānāmbhivodha ayuṣo 'nuṛttīprat- yayabhūtaḥ //  
(CARAKASAMHITĀ)**

"Air (vāyu) is the holder of this body-machine; it is the propeller of all its activities. It is the controller of the mind straying towards undesirable things, and is the motivator of the mind for desirable things. It is also the motivator of all sense organs. It connects all the sense organs to the mind and is witness to the continuity of life."

**vāyurāyurbalaṁ vāyurvāyurdhātā śarīriṇām /  
vāyurviśvamidaṁ sarvaṁ prabhurvāyuśca kīrtitaḥ //  
(CARAKASAMHITĀ)**

"Air is life, air is strength, air is the sustainer of living beings, air is the cause of this universe, and air has been called the lord of all."

**śarīraṁ hi vinā vāyurṁ samatān̄ yāti dārubhiḥ/  
vāyuh prāṇaḥ sukhaṁ vāyurvāyuh sarvamidaṁ jagat //  
(RĀMĀYANA)**

"The body without air is like faggots (insentient). Therefore air is the prāṇa (life) in the body; in short, it is every thing."

**yena jīvati jīvo 'yam nirjīvo yam nirjīvo yam vinā bhavet /**

**sa prāṇa iti vikhyāto vāyuh kṣetracarah paraḥ //**  
**(ŚARṄGADHARAPADDHATI)**

"What keeps a living being alive, without which the body become lifeless, that is called 'prāṇa'. This prāṇa-vāyu (vital air) is the best of all that roam in the body (kṣetra)."

**prāṇo brahmeti vyajānāt.**  
**prāṇāddhyeva khalvimāni bhūtāni jāyante, prāṇena**  
**jātāni jīvanti prāṇam prayantyaabhisamviśanti.**  
**(TAITTIRĪYOPANIṢAD 3.3)**

"Living beings are born of prāṇa, on being born they are kept alive by prāṇa, and in the end dissolve into prāṇa."

**prāṇam devā anuprāṇanti manuṣyāḥ paśavaśca ye /**  
**prāṇo hi bhūtānāmāyustasmātsarvāyūṣamucyate //**  
**(TAITTIRĪYA UP. 2.3)**

"Gods, human beings, birds and animals become the followers of prāṇa and perform prāṇana (keep body and soul together). Therefore, he is called 'sarvāyūṣa' (the life of all)."

**sarvameva ta āyuryānti ye prāṇam brahmopāsate /**  
**prāṇo hi bhūtānāmāyustasmātsarvāyūṣamucyate //**  
**(TAITTIRĪYA UP. 2.3)**

"Those who worship prāṇa as 'brahma' attain full longevity. Prāṇa only is the age of living beings. That is why it is called 'sarvāyūṣa'."

**ātharvaṇīrāṅgirasīrdaivī manuṣyajā uta /**  
**oṣadhayaḥ prajāyante yadā tvaṁ prāṇa jinvasi //**  
**(ATHARVAVEDA 11.4.16)**

"O Prāṇa! The ātharvaṇī, āṅgirasī, divine and man-made medicines are efficacious only till you inhabit the body propelling it."

**prāṇāyāmena yuktena sarvarogakṣayo bhavet /**  
**ayuktābhyāsayogena sarvarogasya sambhavaḥ //**  
**(HAṬHAYOGAPRADĪPIKĀ)**

"With the prāṇāyāma done methodically all the diseases are eradicated, and all diseases can develop by doing the prāṇāyāma in an improper way."

**pavano badhyate yena manastenaiva badhyate /**  
**manaśca badhyate yena pavanastena badhyate //**  
**(HATHAYOGAPRADĪPIKĀ)**

"The means by which air (vāyu) is restrained also restrains the mind, and the means by which the mind is restrained also restrains the air."

**The reward of Prāṇa-worship**

**yathā prāṇa balihṛtastubhyaṁ sarvaḥ prajā imāḥ /  
evā tasmai balim harānyastvā śṛṇavat suśravaḥ /  
(ATHARVA. 11.4.19)**

**prāṇa yathā** = O Prāṇa, as  
**imāḥ sarvāḥ prajāḥ** = all these subjects  
**tubhyaṁ** = unto you  
**balihṛtaḥ** = are tax (tribute)-payers  
**evā** = similarly  
**suśravaḥ** = the noble listener  
**yaḥ tvā śṛṇavat** = who listens to you  
**tasmai balim harān** = to him you pay the tax (tribute)

'Prāṇa' means life-prop. When the soul comes into the body, the prāṇas also come and settle there. With the prāṇa going in and out, one feels the existence of soul in the body. If the soul departs from the body, prāṇas also do not stay there. The soul is nonphysical; its hunger cannot be satisfied by physical substances. Then the things that we eat and drink, take the tax from earth in the form of foodgrains, fruit, nuts, etc., drink water, milk, etc., keep ourselves cosy and comfortable with fire and blankets—for whom are we doing all this? The Vedas have an answer—

**prāṇa balihṛtastubhyaṁ sarvāḥ prajā imāḥ.**

'O Prāṇa! Fire-air-water—all these subjects are paying you tax (tribute)."

Its proof lies in the fact that by eating and drinking the body is nourished and the sense organs become strong. The life-force (prāṇa-śakti) is strengthened. There is no growth or decay of the soul by eating or not eating. Had eating and drinking been the cause of growth and decay of the soul, then all the gluttons would have been spiritually advanced; but these gluttons go the demoniac way of life of eating, drinking and being merry. Therefore, eating and drinking is, in fact, for the sake of prāṇa. When the vital air (prāṇa-vāyu) and the gastric fire combine to sap the strength of tissues in our body, the we feel hungry, and we have to satisfy our hunger by taking food, etc. similarly, when they combine to dry up water in the body, then

we feel thirsty, and to quench our thirst we have to take water. Food and water is the tax paid to prāṇa.

But the function of prāṇa is not merely to consume food and water, to metabolise it, and to demand it again. On close scrutiny, we shall find that when we eat or drink, the prāṇa stops, our trachea is closed. If the trachea remains open at that time, food and water goes into it, causing great discomfort which continues until the food or water gone into the trachea is not cleared out. This proves that on one hand prāṇa is the prop for life, while on the other it is very essential to restrain prāṇas for the sake of life. If the activity of prāṇa is not restrained, prāṇa cannot have its due.

While lifting some weight from the ground prāṇas have to be compulsively restrained. If the prāṇas (breath) give way/exit at that time, the weight falls down from our hands. This shows that there is great force in prāṇa-restraint.

Perhaps, that is why Manu says:

**prāṇāyāmaḥ param tapah-**There is no greater penance than prāṇāyāma.

One who listens to these and this type of mysteries of prāṇa is 'suśravaḥ'. The listening of only that person is fruitful who acquires the knowledge of these powers of prāṇa.

**tasmai baliṃ harān-**Even prāṇas pay the tax to him.

Only they pay taxes (tributes) who are subordinate to somebody, i.e., prāṇa becomes their subordinate who after attaining knowledge conduct themselves accordingly. Therefore, to gain control of prāṇa one should do prāṇāyāma. Even while gaining control of prāṇa one has to run the prāṇas like bellows.

**Therefore, Manu Says:**

**prāṇāyāmairdahed doṣan**

One should destroy physical and mental flaws by prāṇāyāma.

**Knowledge through prāṇa**

**vīlu cidārujatnubhirguhā cidindra vahnibhiḥ /  
avinda usriyā anu //** (ṚG. 1.6.5)

Meaning-**indra** O embodied soul! **ārujatnubhiḥ** torturing, tiring **vahnibhiḥ** by prāṇas, the cause of holding life **guhā cit** even though hidden **usriyā** rays of knowledge **vīlu cit** quickly **anu avindah**

acquires appropriately, smoothly.

Interpretation:-The importance of prāṇa has been described in a few words. Here, instead of prāṇa, it has been called 'vahni'. In classical Sanskrit the word 'vahni' means 'fire'.

The fire of life burns in the body only till the prāṇas dwell in it. The moment prāṇas depart the body also becomes cold and lifeless. Therefore, prāṇa is really fire. If fire gives us comfort, it gives us pain too. The experience of the pain from fire is fully felt in the summer season. Every thing gets parched and dried up. Similarly, when the prāṇa-fire does not get the fuel, it starts burning up the flesh and blood in the body, but the pain-giving aspect of prāṇas is fully realized when one lies on the death-bed. The enjoyment stage is over. The fire of death (yama) has arrived to snatch the life-bird from the cage of body. The passage for prāṇa is blocked. It is not getting any way out; it is straining at the cage bars and writhing in pain. Looking at this miserable plight of the dying person, the seeker of liberation (mumukṣu) gains control over these pain-giving prāṇas. Seeing that the time of death has arrived he pulls these prāṇas out easily and expels them. He does not let the prāṇas be fire (a burning agent) but makes them the fire (vahni=holder, carrier) of the Vedas. Now the prāṇas have been made 'vahni', they have been held; their movement has been stopped; therefore, they have also become holders. In this respect, prāṇa and dharma (the path of righteous conduct) behave in the same way. Dharma kills if it is killed (=not properly observed), and it protects if properly observed. Prāṇa, if converted into fire, burns, but in the form of vahni (holder, carrier) it enlivens. The choice is yours whether you want to live or to burn.

Even after being converted into 'vahni', the prāṇa continues to be 'ārujatnu' (destroyer, demolisher). Now it does not break limbs, does not torture the body, because with the help of prāṇic procedures the body has been purged of all its dross. Now it rips apart the screen of ignorance covering the soul. Therefore the Veda says: **avinda usriyā anu**-O Soul! It is you who receive the rays of knowledge smoothly. The great yogi Patañjali has confirmed this truth of the Veda on the basis of his experience: **tataḥ kṣīyate prakāśāvaram** (YOGADARŚANA)- with the perfecting of prāṇāyāma the screen (haze) covering the light of intellect is destroyed.

The Veda says further–

**yadā gacchātyasunīmetāmāthā devānām vaśanīrbhavati.  
(ṚG. 10.16.2)**

"When the seeker acquires 'asunīti' (the discipline of propelling prāṇas), then he becomes the controller of sense organs."

If you want to control sense organs, control the prāṇa. There is a lot of profundity in this statement. The sense organs are dominated by the mind. The mind is very unstable, very quick—it is the quickest of all. The sense organs follow it wherever it goes. The controlling of sense organs by 'asunīti' (praṇic discipline) means also the controlling of the mind, the supreme lord of sense organs. This state is called 'yoga'. As the Kaṭhapaniṣad says:

**yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante jñānāni manasā saha /  
buddhiśca na viceṣṭati tāmāhuḥ paramām gatim //  
tām yogamiti manyante sthirāmindriyadhāraṇām //  
(2.3.10-11)**

"When all the five senses of perception are restrained along with the mind, and the intellect also becomes unwavering, that state is called 'paramagati' (supreme state). That stabilized concentration of the senses is called 'yoga'. Practise prāṇāyāma if you want to control the senses, or if you want to put your senses to their proper use. Attain perfection in prāṇāyāma if you want to rip off the screen of ignorance from your intellect and want to achieve the pure, radiant and white light of knowledge."

The great savant of prāṇāyāma, Swami Dayanand, says in the third chapter of Satyarthaprakāśa: "When a person practises prāṇāyāma, then every moment progressively he destroys impurity and illumines the light of knowledge. The knowledge of his soul goes on increasing till he attains liberation. As the dross in metals like gold, etc. is destroyed on their being heated in fire and they get purified, similarly with the practice of prāṇāyāma the flaws and impurities in the mind and senses are destroyed and they become pure....By gaining control over prāṇas one gains control over the mind and senses. There is an increase in strength and prowess, and the intellect becomes so sharp and subtle that it grasps quickly very difficult and abstruse topics. This increases semen in a man's body and he gains firm strength, valour and conquest over his senses. He masters all the scriptures in

a short time and they are always on his tongue. Women should also practise yoga likewise."

The Vedas, Manu, Patañjali, Dayanand—all sing the glory of prāṇa unaniously.

**The protector of prāṇas remains protected altogether—**

**na sa jīyate maruto na hanyate na sredhati na vyathate na  
riṣyati /  
nāsya rāya upa dasyanti notaya ṛṣim vā yaṁ rājānam vā  
suṣūdata // (ṚG. 5.54.7)**

Meaning : **marutaḥ** O Prāṇas! **yaṁ** whom **ṛṣim** to the savant **vā** or **rājānam** one engaged in the duty of protecting others **vā** or some other person **suṣūdata** provide comfort, happiness, **saḥ** he **na** not **jīyate** put to any harm or loss, **na** not **sredhati** lose his longevity **na+vyathate** does not tremble with fear **na+riṣyati** does not become angry, **na** nor (does) **asya** his **rāyaḥ** wealth **upadasyanti** decay and **na** nor do his **ūtayaḥ** affections, affinities, good relations perish.

Interpretation: A man is haunted by many fears, sometimes of the loss in his longevity, sometimes of death, sometimes of being humiliated or reprimanded by somebody, sometimes one develops tremors or shivering in body due to some disease, sometimes he is tormented by the fear of losing his wealth, and sometimes the fear of losing his good and cordial relations worries him a lot. The Vedas say that if you want to get rid of all these tensions, seek the refuge of prāṇa. If you are able to engage/deploy prāṇas for your security, you will not be agitated by any fear.

All agree that you live a longer life with the practice of prāṇa. Therefore, whoever disciplines his prāṇas, will live longer, not shorter. One does not suffer the affliction of death if one disciplines the prāṇa. Death is a certainty. Whoever is born will definitely die—**jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyuḥ**. The death of one who is born is inevitable, but one who practises prāṇa is saved of the torturing pain felt by a dying person (mumūrṣu) on his death-bed. Being face to face with death he immediately expels his prāṇa without much effort immediately. With the disciplining of prāṇa he achieves self-realization, and he feels that the soul as that of his dwells in everybody, which makes him eschew violence and anger. One gets angry on account of somebody's faults and mistakes. The disciplining of prāṇas has made him realize his

own faults and shortcomings; now he gets busy with correcting his own faults. He has no time to find faults in others. His eyes are still looking for faults, but for his own faults, and not of others. One is haunted by fear or trembling at the prospect of losing some thing or substance. When that possibility exists no more, where is the cause for any fear or worry?

The wealth of such an ascetic (abstemious person) never decays because he disciplines *prāṇas* and observes abstinence in his life strictly; he has guarded himself against all evil addictions. By virtue of self-realization, he behaves himself wisely and sagaciously with love and affection toward everybody. Therefore, he is loved by one and all.

**pra nū sa marutaḥ śavasā janām ati tasthau va ūtī maruto yamāvata. (RG. 1.64.13)**

"O *Prāṇas*! That man is really superior in strength to the common people whom you give your loving protection."

There is great strength/power in *prāṇa*. While lifting any weight from the ground if the breath gives way in between, the weight falls down from the hand, because *prāṇa*, the prop of strength, went out. Therefore, those who desire to build up strength in their body must practise *prāṇāyāma*.

**Rarely anybody pays heed to *prāṇas*-**

**yaddha yānti marutaḥ sam̐ ha bruvate 'dhvannā / śṛṇoti kaścideṣām // (RG. 1.37.13)**

Meaning : **yat + ha** whenever **marutaḥ** *prāṇas* **yānti** move **ha** really **adhvan** on the way **ā** all around **sam̐ + bruvate** tell clearly. **kaścit** rarely anybody **eṣām** (words) of these **prāṇas** **śṛṇoti** listens, pays heed to.

Interpretation : This universe is a storehouse of strange things. The microcosm, that our body seems, is also a sort of museum. The eyes, nose, ears, etc. in the body are attracted to certain things. The eyes are thirsting for beauty, the ears are hungry for sound, the tongue wants palatable things, the nose loves fragrant flowers, the skin is itching for contact. The beauty, etc. allure the eyes and deviate them from the right path; but *prāṇas* are not enamoured of any thing. Even unparalleled beauty, most melodious words, ambrosial food and drinks, feather-soft touch and heavenly perfume cannot create any hindrance in its work. *Yajurveda* puts it very beautifully: **tatra jāgrto**

**asvapnajau satrasadau ca devau.** In that body the gods running the yajña of life are never overcome by sleep and keep an incessant vigil. The eye blinks, and shuts. The tongue also gets fed up. Similarly fatigue overtakes all the sense organs, but the prāṇas are ever awake. They are very dutiful sentinels. They are so very beneficence-minded that **-yaddha yānti marutaḥ saṁ ha bruvate 'dhvannā-**when they move/circulate they go on announcing their full route.

Observe an infant while he is sleeping; whether to whether are his breaths (prāṇas) going. They are clearly going up to the navel and come back upward from there. Put your hand on the fontanelle of the infant; on that very tender spot there, put your hand very carefully and delicately. You will feel the strong stroke of prāṇa there. In this way prāṇas are telling you their route: "Our route runs from the bottom upward." Arrange so that the prāṇas reach upward. Prāṇas are always on the move. Therefore, they are always transmitting their message; but **-śṛnoti kascideṣām-**rarely anybody listens to them. Whoever listens to them, he becomes capable of controlling his senses **-ni vo yāyāma mānuṣo dadha ugrāya manyave/ jihīta parvato giriḥ** (ṚG 1.37.7). If a human being prevents you from your extreme (volatile) thinking even for three hours, even the mountain (made of many strata of rocks) feels the tremor. Listen to the prāṇas for a couple of hours, control them, hold them, your internal mountain-ranges (spine) will also feel the tremor. Suṣumṇā (spinal cord) will wake up. To put in a few words, even the duration of time was laid down for awakening suṣumṇā. Sitting unmoved for three hours (one prahara) with restrained breath (prāṇa) awakens suṣumṇā. Experienced seekers confirm it on the basis of their own experience.

**Two airs (vāyus) (prāṇa-apāna)-**

**dvāvimau vātau vāta ā sindhorā parāvataḥ /  
dakṣam te anya ā vātu parā 'nyo vātu yadrapaḥ //**  
**(ṚG. 10.137.2)**

In our body (dvau imau vātau) two types of air, prāṇa and apāna (vātaḥ) are moving. One out of these two (ā+parāvataḥ) is up to the outer atmosphere. O Prāṇāyāma - practising man! one out of them, i.e. prāṇa-vāyu, (te) in you (dakṣam) health, vigour, courage and vitality (āvātu) may bring, instil and (anyaḥ) the other one i.e. apāna-vāyu (yadrapaḥ) whatever debility and diseases are in you, them (parā vātu)

may throw out of the body.

**Conquering sins with the help of prāṇa–**

**vṛtrasya tvā śvasathādīṣamāṇā viśve devā ajahurye sakhāyaḥ /  
marudbhirindra sakhyam te astvathemā viśvāḥ pṛtanā jayāsi //**  
**(ṚG. 8.96.7)**

**viśve devāḥ** = all divine attributes  
**ye sakhāyaḥ**= which were friends earlier  
**vṛtrasya śvasathāt**= by the breath of sin  
**iṣamāṇāḥ**= being frightened  
**tvām ajahuḥ**= deserted you  
**indra**= (therefore) O Indra, opulence-desiring person  
**marudbhiḥ**= with Maruts (Prāṇas)  
**te sakhyam astu**= may be your friendship  
**atha**= so that  
**imaḥ viśvāḥ**= all these  
**pṛtanāḥ**= tensions and worries  
**jayāsi**= you may conquer.

The Soul has many divine attributes, like compassion, pardon, fortitude, purity, restraint, non-violence, truthfulness, control, etc. These attributes go on growing constantly till the sin makes its entry into the Soul. The quartet of dharma (righteous conduct), artha (wealth), kāma (sex, desire) and mokṣa (liberation) also dwells in the Soul amicably. All four–**guṇānurāgādīva sakhyamīvān**–are as if in mutual friendship due to their affinity with attributes. There is a constant war between the gods and Vṛtra. 'Vṛtra' means overcasting sin. The sin is hostile to good attributes.

The good attributes try to put the sin to rout. Thus a duel fight with the Soul starts. When the Soul becomes more inclined toward Vṛtra, then frightened by the camping in Vṛtra-

**viśve devā ajahurye sakhāyaḥ**

"All divine attributes which were earlier friends of the Soul desert company."

With the growth of sin all gods (divine attributes) disappear. What will remain of the Soul after the disappearance of divine attributes? If the Soul and divine attributes are to be protected, put the sins to rout. For vanquishing the sins, '**marudbhirindra sakhyam te astu**'- 'O Indra! you should develop friendship with prāṇas' means that the

prāṇas move in consonance with the Soul. At present, the layman has no knowledge of the movement of his inhalation and exhalation. The breath goes in and out in accordance with divine dispensation. They are no doubt incarcerated in the body due to the Soul dwelling in the body, but they do not move in consonance with the Soul. If the prāṇas move in consonance with the Soul, there shall never be any disease in the body. If the prāṇas be under the control of the Soul, the mind and sense organs will also be under the control of the Soul. If the mind is controlled, sense organs will automatically be controlled, because they are under the subjugation of the mind. It is proved by experience that by gaining control over prāṇa (vital air) the mind is also controlled. Therefore, the Vedas say: **athemā viśvāḥ pṛtanā jayāsi**– 'you will be able to conquer all these tensions and worries.' All the tensions and agitations which are born of sin can be destroyed by developing friendship and consonance with prāṇa. The underlying reason is : **prāṇaya namo yasya sarvamideva vaśe** : 'obeisance to Prāṇa who controls this all.' What doubt can there be in the prāṇa being the lord of all? Therefore, we should develop friendship with this sovereign lord, i.e., Prāṇa.

The friendship with Prāṇa develops with the practice of prāṇāyāma. Harm is caused by not doing prāṇāyāma, by not restraining prāṇas. As the Atharvaveda says:

**sa ya evaṁ viduṣa upadraṣṭā bhavati prāṇam ruṇaddhi // 54 //**  
**na ca prāṇam sarvajyāniṁ jīyate purainam jarasaḥ prāṇo jahāti // 56 //**

"One who is the disciple of the savant attaining brahmajñāna (knowledge of the Supreme), performs the control / restraint of prāṇa (prāṇāyāma). If he does not perform prāṇa-restraint (prāṇāyām), he incurs loss of his whole life. If not the loss of his life, prāṇa deserts him before old age."

This statement proves that a man suffers loss by not doing prāṇāyāma. It is not possible to conserve semen in the body without prāṇāyāma. Semen is the essence of life; it is the prop of life. The basis of this life-support in prāṇāyāma is extremely essential for a long life. The description of prāṇa given in the Vedas proves that the meaning of prāṇāyāma is to control prāṇa (life-force). While the controlling of this life-force contributes to your longevity, there is no torment at the

time of death. Finding oneself face to face with death the Soul expels the prāṇas without any effort. Such a great soul is called 'mṛtyuñjaya' (conqueror of death).

We have told it a number of times that sin is destroyed with the practice of prāṇāyāma. The Soul has to face many types of agitations and tensions. The activity of life depends on prāṇa, this has also been said in the preceding mantra. If the prāṇic activity is not going in the proper way, a person falls prey to a host of diseases, like cough, cold, asthma, tuberculosis, etc. Therefore, it is most essential to control the prāṇas for protecting the body against diseases. There is an intimate relationship between the prāṇa and the mind. The restraining of prāṇa is indispensable for removing the instability of the mind. The relation between the Soul and the prāṇa is obvious. Prāṇas cannot stay in the body without the soul, and there is no incontrovertible proof of the existence of soul in the body in the absence of movement of prāṇas therein. For making the extrovert Soul introvert, along with the mind and sense organs, for realizing one's self, the restraining/controlling of prāṇa is the best means. From this point of view it is proved that it is most beneficial to gain control over the prāṇa to dispel physical and mental blemishes. Therefore, the Vedas say:

It is very logical- '**marudbhirindra sakhyam te astvathemā viśvāḥ pṛtanā jayāsi.**'

**Bṛhadviṣṇu :**

**prāṇāyāmān dvijaḥ kuryāt sarvapāpānupattaye /  
dahyante sarvapāpāni prāṇāyāmaidvijasya tu //**

"A seeker should do prāṇāyāma to dispel all sins. By doing prāṇāyāma all sins are burnt, are destroyed."

**Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇāgnipurāṇa :**

**sarvadoṣaharaḥ proktaḥ prāṇāyāmo dvijanmanām /  
tatastvabhyadhikam nāsti pāpanāśanakāraṇam //**

"For the twice-born prāṇāyāma has been called the destroyer of all flaws and blemishes. There is no greater agent than this to destroy sins."

**Atri:**

**karmaṇā manasā vācā hyahnā pāpaṁ kṛtamca yat /  
āsīnaḥ paścimām sandhyām prāṇāyāmairyapohati //**

"Whatever sins of mind, speech and action are committed by a

person during the day are dispelled by him by doing prāṇyāma in the evening twilight."

**Agnipurāna :**

**prāṇyāmatrayaṁ kṛtvā prāṇyāmāstribhirniśi /  
ahorātrakṛtāt pāpāt mucyate nātra saṁśayaḥ //**

"By doing three prāṇyāmas each in the morning and evening, a man is emancipated of the sins committed by him during day and night."

**Vasiṣṭha :**

**prāṇyāmān dhārayet trīn yathāvidhi suyantritaḥ /  
ahorātrakṛtaṁ pāpaṁ tatkṣaṇādeva naśyati //  
(prāṇyāmairdahed doṣān prāṇyāmaḥ paraṁ tapaḥ)**

"One should do three prāṇyāmas everyday methodically and with proper restraint. With this a person is liberated of the sins committed by him during day and night."

**Bṛhaspati:**

**prāṇyāmairdahed doṣān manovāgdehasambhavān.**

"By prāṇyāmā one should destroy the sins of mind, speech and body."

**Baudhāyana :**

**etadādyam tapaḥ proktametaddharmasya lakṣaṇam /  
sarvadoṣopaghātārthametadeva viśiṣyate //**

"This (prāṇyāma) has been called the main penance. It is a sign of dharma (righteous conduct). It has been considered to be a special means for destroying all the sins and blemishes."

**Atri and Vasiṣṭha:**

**āvarttayet sadā yuktaḥ prāṇyāmān punaḥ punaḥ /  
ākeśāgrānnakhāgrācca tapastapyata uttamam //**

"A man should always concentrate his mind and repeat prāṇyāmas again and again. One who does this performs the supreme penance from top to toe."

**Viṣṇudharmottara-Agnipurāna:**

**ākeśāgrānnakhāgrācca tapastapyet sudāruṇam /  
ātmānam śodhayatyeva prāṇyāmaḥ punaḥ punaḥ //**

"One who does prāṇyāma does a hard penance from top to toe. The

prāṇāyāma done repeatedly purifies a man."

**Br̥hadyama:**

**yathā hi śailadhātūnām dhamyatām dhamyate rajaḥ /  
indriyaṇām tathā doṣān prāṇāyāmaīśca nirdaḥet //**

"As the dross of metals taken from a mountain is removed by blasts of air in fire, similarly a person should burn away the faults and blemishes of sense organs by doing prāṇāyāma."

**Br̥haspati: Vācaspatyam-p.4516**

**dhamyamānaṁ yathā hyetaddhātūnām dhamyate malam /  
tathendriyakṛto doṣaḥ prāṇāyāmena dahyate //**

"As the dross of metals is destroyed by blasts of air in fire, similarly the faults of sense organs are burnt away by prāṇāyāma."

**Yogiyājñavalkya:**

**yathā parvatadhātūnām doṣān dahati pāvakaḥ /  
evamantargataṁ cainaṁ prāṇāyāmena dahyate //**

"As the fire burns away the dross of metals of the mountain, similarly internal dross and sins are burnt away by prāṇāyāma."

**Atri and Vasiṣṭha :**

**nirodhājāyate vāyurvāyoragniḥ prajāyate /  
agnerāpo vyajāyanta tairantaḥ śudhyati tribhiḥ //**

"By holding up the breaths (prāṇas) with prāṇāyāma, air accumulates in the body. This generates fire and heat in the body and after this there is water or perspiration. Thus by doing three prāṇāyāmas there is internal cleansing by air, fire and water. The body and the mind become clean."

**Viṣṇudharmottara-Agnipurāṇa :**

**nirodhājāyate vāyustasmādnistato jalam /  
tribhiḥ śarīraṁ sakalam prāṇāyāmairviśudhyati //**

**Manu:**

**prāṇāyāmā brāhmaṇasya trayo 'pi vidhivatkr̥tāḥ /  
vyāhṛtipraṇavairyuktā vijñeyaṁ paramaṁ tapaḥ //**  
(MANUSMṚTI 6.70)

"If a person does even three prāṇāyāmas in the proper method chanting in his mind 'om bhūrbhuvāḥ svaḥ.'" i.e. omkāra with the three mystical

incantations, it is the supreme penance for him. Three is the minimum number prescribed. A person is benefitted more if he does it more according to his practice and capacity."

**Yogacūḍāmaṇi Upaniṣad :**

**prāṇāyāmo bhavedevaṃ pātakendhanapāvakaḥ /  
bhavadadhimahāsetuḥ procyate yogibhiḥ sadā //**

Prāṇāyāma is the fire which burns down the faggots of sin; it is the great bridge to go across the ocean of mundane existence,—this is what the yogis say.

**yuktaṃ yuktaṃ tyajedvāyum yuktaṃ yuktaṃ prapūrayet /  
yuktaṃ yuktaṃ prabadhnyādevaṃ siddhimavāpnuyāt //**

"A prāṇāyāma- practitioner should exhale and inhale in the proper manner and also hold it inside according to his capacity in the proper manner. Thus, by doing the prāṇāyāma cautiously and methodically, one achieves success."

**Manu:**

**prāṇāyāmairdahed doṣān dhāraṇābhīṣca kilviṣam /  
pratyāhāreṇa samsargān dhyānenāniṣvarān guṇān //**  
(MANUSMṚTI 6.72)

"By prāṇāyāmas a man should burn down evils, like rāga (attachment) etc. By dhāraṇā (concentration) he should destroy sins, by pratyāhāra (withdrawal) he should ward off the attraction of sense organs for various enjoyments, and by dhyāna (meditation)" ....

**ahnā rātryā ca yān jantūn hinastvajñānato yatih /  
teṣāṃ snātvā viśuddhyarthaṃ prāṇāyāmān ṣaḍāret //**  
(MANUSMṚTI 6.69)

"While walking around during day and night one kills insects, worms, etc. For the purification of this sin an ascetic should do six prāṇāyāmas after taking bath."

**ekākṣaram param brahma prāṇāyāmaḥ param tapaḥ /  
sāvitrīyāstu param nāsti maunāt satyaṃ viśiṣyate //**  
(MANUSMṚTI 2.83)

"The single syllable 'om' denotes the Supreme Brahman, or it is the real name of īśvara. Prāṇāyāma is the greatest penance. There is no mantra greater than Sāvitrī (Gāyatrī) Mantra. It is better to speak the truth than remain silent."

**Aruṇasmṛti-p.2130**

**athavā mucyate pāpāt prāṇāyāmaparāyaṇah /  
prāṇāyāmairdahet sarvaṁ śarīre yacca pātakam // 21 //**

"One who does prāṇāyāma is liberated from sins. Therefore, all the dross, faults and blemishes in the body should be burnt down by prāṇāyāma."

**yatha vegagato vahniḥ śuṣkārdrāṁ dahatīndhanam /  
prāṇāyāmaistathā pāpam śuṣkārdrāṁ nātra saṁśayaḥ // 30 //**

"The strong fire burns down all the fuel, dry or wet. Similarly, prāṇāyāma burns down big and small flaws and blemishes there is no doubt about it."

**Bṛhadyogiyājñavalkyasmṛti:**

**Gāyatrī Prāṇāyāma**

**savyāhṛtīm sapraṇavām gāyatrīm śirasā saha  
triḥ paṭhedāyataprāṇaḥ prāṇāyāmaḥ sa ucyate**

"Chant the Gāyatrī Mantra (along with OM BHŪRBHUVAH SVAH) three times in your mind while holding up your breath,— this (according to scriptures) is called prāṇāyāma, i.e., one prāṇāyāma is completed when you chant Gāyatrī Mantra thrice to yourself while holding the breath in or out.

**Bṛhadyogiyājñavalkyasmṛti: 27-34 (P.2304)**

**prāṇāyāmaśataṁ kāryaṁ sarvapāpaprāṇāśanam /  
upapātakajātīnāmanādiṣṭasya caiva hi // BRĪHA. 8.36 (p.2304)**

"One hundred prāṇāyāmas should be done as an atonement for all the sins. By doing this no thought of committing any sin comes to the mind in future. The scriptures speak about upapātakas (minor sins); for their atonement also a person should do 100 prāṇāyāmas. This purifies the mind which turns away from committing any sin in future. A person should do 100 prāṇāyāmas as an atonement for those sins for which no atonement has been prescribed by the scriptures, so that one is not inclined again to commit those sins."

**(Courtesy-SVĀDHYĀYA SANDOHA)**



## SOME RULES FOR PRĀṆĀYĀMA

Prāṇāyāma should be done at a pure, calm and quiet and clean place. If possible, it should be practised near some body of water.

In cities where there is a lot of pollution, the place before practising prāṇāyāma should be scented with ghee and guggulu (incense), or a lamp of ghee should be lit up

For Prāṇāyāma one should sit in siddhāsana, sukhāsana or padmāsana with the spine held erect. The āsana used for sitting should be a bad conductor of electricity, e.g. a blanket or kuśa- mat. Those who are unable to sit on ground can practise prāṇāyāma while sitting in chair

One should always breathe through nose. This filters the air during inhalation. Even during the day one should breathe through nose. This also regulates the temperature of the body through idā- piṅgalā nāḍīs and foreign matter stays out in the nostrils.

While doing prāṇāyāma the mind should be calm and cheerful. Otherwise, through prāṇāyāma also the mind automatically becomes calm, cheerful and concentrated.

If one feels tired while doing prāṇāyāma, one should do some light exercise (sūkṣma vyāyāma) or take rest in between.

Do observe restraint and good conduct for the constant practice of prāṇāyāma. The food should be pure, simple and properly lubricating. It is beneficial to consume milk, ghee, almonds and fruit in right quantity.

Do not hold the breath forcibly in prāṇāyāma. For doing prāṇāyāma, the act of breathing in is 'pūraka', holding it inside is 'kumbhaka', breathing out is 'recaka', and to hold the breath outside is 'bāhyakumbhaka'.

Prāṇāyāma does not merely mean 'pūraka', 'kumbhaka' or 'recaka'; it also means practising to make the mind stable and concentrated while controlling and balancing the rate of breathing.

It is spiritually beneficial that before prāṇāyāma one should do long chanting of 'OM' at least three times, or one should methodically chant or recite Gāyatrī, Mahāmṛtyuñjaya or some other Vedic mantra.

While doing prāṇāyāma, one should be in his normal, natural state without putting any sort of stress on the organs of his body like face, mouth, eyes, nose, etc. During the practice of prāṇāyāma, sit with your neck, spine, chest and waist erect; only then the practice will be methodical and beneficial.

Prāṇāyāma should be done slowly with patience and caution, without any hurry.

**yathā simho gajo vyāghro bhaved vaśyaḥ śanaiḥ śanaiḥ /  
tathaiva vaśyate vāyuranyathā hanti sādhakam //**

"The ferocious wild animals like lions, elephants and tigers are tamed gradually with great caution. If this is done in a hurry, these animals can attack us and do us harm. Similarly, prāṇa (breath) should be brought under control by increasing the practice of prāṇāyāma gradually, otherwise harm can be caused to a learner".

To reap full benefit from the practice of all types of prāṇāyāmas one should memorize this śloka from Gītā and follow it by repeating it to oneself:

**yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu /  
yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhaḥ //**

"If a person eats properly and conducts his life properly, has a set routine for his worldly activities, has a fixed time to go to bed and to get up, only such a person can practise yoga; and by practising yoga he destroys his miseries, not other persons".

Prāṇāyāma should be done with clean bowels after morning toilet. If somebody has constipation he should take the juice of āmalaka (gooseberry) and ghṛtakumāri (aloe vera) after dinner. This will prevent constipation.

One feels more delighted, cheerful and purified if prāṇāyāma is done after taking bath. If one likes to take bath after prāṇāyāma, it can be taken after 10-15 minutes. One can take juice, sprouted grains or some other food, 10-15 minutes after prāṇāyāma in the morning.

One should not take tea, coffee or other stimulants and intoxicants immediately after prāṇāyāma.

It is a healthy habit to take milk, curd, buttermilk, fruit juice, green vegetable juice, and fruits like papaya, apple, guava, cherry, etc.

After prāṇāyāma one should take sprouted grains, porridge or some local/indigenous easily digestible food. In the first instance, one should avoid eating paranthas, halwa and other breakfast, and if one has a craving for paranthas, a healthy person may take such heavy breakfast only once, or at the most twice, in a week. A sick person should abstain from taking heavy (fatty, fried) food.

It is not proper to take the same type of breakfast everyday. For complete nourishment of the body one should programme one's breakfast during the week in such a way that one changes from sprouted grains to porridge, to milk, to fruit only, to juice or curd only, to buttermilk etc. on different days. This will give complete nourishment to the body and the breakfast will not be a boredom. Change is the law of life, and our preference too.

The food of a yoga practitioner should be pure and simple (sāttvika). Take green vegetables in a large quantity, take less quantity of cereals, and take the pulses with husk. Eat what is seasonal (ṛtabhuk), what is in a limited quantity (mitabhuk) and what suits your health (hitabhuk). Vegetarian food is the best, wholesome and scientific.

On getting up in the morning, drinking water and washing the eyes with cold water is very beneficial for stomach and eyes.

One must drink water once between breakfast and lunch, and in small quantities several times between lunch and dinner. This protects us against diseases of digestive system, urinary system, obesity, cholesterol, etc.

Pregnant women should not do kapālabhāti, bāhya prāṇāyāma and agnisāra kriyā but they should do rest of the prāṇāyāmas and light (sūkṣma) exercises like butterfly āsana, etc. gently. During the menstrual period women should not do bāhya prāṇāyāma and difficult āsanas. They must do regularly light exercises and all other prāṇāyāmas, except bahya prāṇāyāma, even during

the menstrual period. Pregnant women should not do difficult āsanas like sarvāṅgāsana, halāsana, etc.

Persons suffering from hypertension and heart disease must do all the prāṇāyāmas gently. Prāṇāyāma is the only remedy for them. The only precaution to be observed is that they should practise bhastrikā, kapālabhāti and anuloma-viloma etc. gently, without applying too much of force. Some ignoramuses misinform people by saying that patients of high B.P and heart disease should not do prāṇāyāma. This is total ignorance.

Kapālabhāti prāṇāyāma should be done 4-6 months after any surgery. In the case of bye-pass and angioplasty in heart disease, one must practise anuloma-viloma, bhrāmarī, udgītha prāṇāyāma, light (sūkṣma) exercises and śavāsana, after one week only. This will bring them immediate relief and benefit.



## THE THREE USEFUL BANDHAS (LOCKS) IN PRĀṆĀYĀMA

The energy which goes outward from our body while practising yogāsana and prāṇāyāma is stopped by us and turned inward by bandhas (locks). Bandha only means to tie, to stop. These bandhas (locks) are great aids to prāṇāyāma. Without bandhas, prāṇāyāmas are incomplete. These bandhas are described below in proper order.

### **Jālandhara -bandha**

Sit erect in padmāsana or siddhāsana and fill the breath inside. Both the hands should rest on the knees. Bending the chin downwards and resting it on the throat pit is called Jālandhara- bandha. The gaze should be fixed between the eyebrows. The chest is to be stretched forward. This bandh keeps the nāḍī- network in the throat tied up (strong and tight)

### **Benefits**

The throat becomes sweet, melodious and attractive.

With the closure of iḍā, piṅgalā nāḍīs due to contraction of throat the prāṇa enters into suṣumṇā (spinal cord).

It is beneficial in all the diseases of throat. It is worth practising in diseases of thyroid, tonsils, etc.

It awakens the viśuddhi cakra (carotid plexus).

### **Uḍḍiyāna- bandha**

The procedure which raises, elevates the prāṇa and makes it enter into suṣumṇā (spinal cord) is called uḍḍiyāna - bandha. While standing rest the hands on both the knees in the normal natural way. Breathe out and let the stomach relax. Raise the chest a little upward while applying 'jālandhara- bandha'. Suck the stomach inward toward the spine, as much as you can. Breathe again and repeat the procedure. To begin with, three times is sufficient. Gradually practise more times. Similarly, practise this bandha in padmāsana or siddhāsana also. (Vide Illustration No. 1 at the outset of this book)

### **Benefits**

Cures all stomach ailments.

Awakens prāṇas and cleanses maṇipūra- cakra (solar plexus)

### **Mūlabandha**

Sitting in siddhāsana or padmāsana, apply bāhya or ābhyaantara kumbhaka and stretch upward the anus and urinary organ. In this bandha the region below the navel is stretched upward. This bandha is easy to apply with the help of bāhya kumbhaka. Those who are well-versed in yogic practices apply this bandha as a normal posture for several hours. Long practice should be done under somebody's guidance.

### **Benefits**

Apāna vāyu moves upward and unites with prāṇa. Thus, this bandha awakens the mūlādhāra cakra (pelvic plexus) and is very helpful in the awakening of kuṇḍalinī (serpent power).

This bandha is excellent in curing constipation and piles and for toning up the digestive system.

It causes the upward movement (ūrdhvaretas) of semen and is therefore very important for celibacy.

### **Mahābandha**

Applying all the three bandhas simultaneously while sitting in any meditative pose like padmāsana, etc., is called 'mahābandha'. All the aforesaid benefits can be obtained through it. All these three bandhas are applied in kumbhaka.

### **Benefits**

Prāṇa moves upward.

The semen gets purified and strength increases.

Mahābandha causes the union of idā, piṅgalā and suṣumṇā.



## THE COMPLETE (Eight) PRĀṆĀYĀMAS

Although various procedures of prāṇāyāma are described in scriptures and each prāṇāyāma has its special significance, yet all the prāṇāyāmas cannot be practised daily. Therefore, with the grace of my preceptors and on the basis of my own experience, I have condensed within eight procedures the whole process of prāṇayama in a distinct scientific method and spiritual way. The benefits which accrue from the complete practice of this prāṇāyāma are briefly listed below:

The three doṣas—vāta, pitta and kapha—become balanced.

The digestive system becomes completely balanced and all stomach ailments are cured.

All the diseases of heart, lungs and brain are cured.

From the common disorders like obesity, diabetes, cholesterol, constipation, flatulence, acidity, respiratory troubles, allergy, migraine, blood pressure, kidney ailments, all sexual diseases of male and female, etc to the incurable diseases like cancer are cured.

High immunity is developed.

One can protect oneself from hereditary diabetes, heart disease, etc.

It gives protection against falling and greying of hair, wrinkles on face, poor eyesight, weak memory, etc., i.e., old age will be delayed and one will live longer.

There will be radiance, glow, lustre and serenity on your face.

Spiritual power (kundalinī jāgaraṇa) will be attained through purification, penetration and awakening of cakras (energy centres).

With the mind getting very stabilized, serene, cheerful and enthusiastic, one will get rid of diseases like depression, etc.

One will start going into dhyāna (meditation) automatically and one will develop the capacity of practising meditation for hours together.

All the diseases of the gross and the subtle body and the flaws like lust, anger, greed, delusion, egoism, etc. are eradicated.

Negative thinking is eliminated, and one who practises prāṇāyāma is always full of positive thinking, energy and self confidence.

### **First procedure : Bhastrikā Prāṇāyāma**

Sitting in a convenient meditative pose and filling the breath inside up to diaphragm through both the nostrils and then breathing it out gently is called bhastrikā prāṇāyāma.

### **The noble resolution (śiva saṅkalpa) during bhastrikā**

While filling the breath inside during bhastrikā prāṇāyāma one should think (resolve) in his mind whatever is noble and pure in the Universe, such as divine power, energy, sanctity, serenity and bliss, is instilling into my body along with prāṇa. I am getting suffused with divine powers. The prāṇāyāma done with this divine resolution is essentially beneficial.

### **The duration of bhastrikā**

There should be inhalation of 2½ seconds and exhalation of 2½ seconds in a rhythmic flow. Thus by doing it non-stop, one can do bhastrikā prāṇāyāma 12 times in one minute. One should do it for 5 minutes in one sitting. In the beginning one may have to take rest in between. It takes about a week to develop the practice of this prāṇāyāma for 5 minutes non-stop.

Healthy persons and slightly sick persons should practise bhastrikā for 5 minutes daily. Those who are suffering from cancer, lung fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, MS, SLE and other incurable diseases should do this prāṇāyāma for 10 minutes. Thus bhastrikā is done 12 times in one minute and 60 times in 5 minutes. If done in two sittings in incurable diseases like cancer this prāṇāyāma is best done 120 times. Normally prāṇāyāma is best done empty stomach. If for some reason one is not able to do prāṇāyāma in the morning it can also be done 5 hours after mid-day meals. If persons suffering from incurable diseases practise prāṇāyāma both in the morning and evening, they will soon benefit more.

### **Special precautions**

Those who are suffering from high B.P. and heart disease, should not practise bhastrikā at vigorous speed.

We should not inflate our stomach while filling the breath inside during this prāṇāyāma. If you fill in the breath up to diaphragm

it will inflate the chest up to ribs, not the stomach. The name of diaphragmatic deep breathing only is bhastrikā.

Practise it at a slow pace in summer season.

Those whose both nostrils are not properly open due to excess of cough or sinus problems, etc, should first close the right nostril and do recaka and pūraka with left nostril. Then they should close the left nostril and do recaka and pūraka with the right nostril at slow, medium or vigorous speed as per their capacity. Then in the end, they should do bhastrikā prāṇāyāma using both iḍa end piṅgalā energy channels. One must practise this prāṇāyāma for 5 minutes daily. Keep your eyes closed while doing this prāṇāyāma and meditate on 'OM' in your mind with each inhalation and exhalation.

### **Benefits**

All kapha diseases like colds, catarrh, allergy, tuberculosis, asthma, chronic catarrh, sinusitis, etc, are cured. Lungs become strong and by getting purified air heart and mind also become healthy.

All the throat diseases like thyroid and tonsilitis are cured.

The three doṣas become balanced. Blood is purified and toxins and foreign matter are expelled from the body.

Prāṇa and mind get stabilized. This is helpful in prāṇa- elevation and awakening of serpent power (kuṇḍalinī jāgaraṇa)

### **Second Procedure : Kapālabhāti Prāṇāyāma**

Kapāla means 'brain, forehead', and bhāti means 'glow, radiance, lustre, luminosity, etc.' The prāṇāyāma which gives glow, radiance, lustre to the brain or forehead is called kapālabhāti. The procedure of this prāṇāyāma is a bit different from bhastrikā. In recaka and pūraka in the bhastrikā prāṇāyāma, equal pressure is exerted on inhalation and exhalation, while in kapālabhāti the whole attention is on recaka, i.e. exhaling vigorously. No effort is made to breathe in, the air that is breathed in naturally is allowed to be inhaled; the whole emphasis is on throwing the air outside. While doing this there is naturally contraction and expansion of abdomen and special force is exerted on mulādhāra (pelvic plexus), svādhiṣṭhāna (hypogastric plexus) and maṇipūra cakra (solar plexus).

### **The noble resolution (śiva saṅkalpa) during kāpalabhāti**

While doing kapālabhāti prāṇāyāma one should resolve in mind that with the air exhaled by him all the diseases and disorders of the body are being thrown out, being eradicated. The recaka (exhalation) procedure should be performed with the feeling that he is expelling all the physical diseases and disorders as well as the mental flaws and distortions like lust, anger, greed, delusion, envy, attachment, aversion, etc. With this resolution of eradication of diseases and disorders while exhaling, one gets a lot of benefit.

### **Duration of Kapālabhāti prāṇāyāma**

The breath should be exhaled in a rhythmic flow once in a second and should be held up effortlessly. If done non-stop kapālabhāti prāṇāyāma is done 60 times in one minute or 300 times in 5 minutes. Very sick and weak persons get tired in 2-3 minutes in the beginning, but in 10-15 days every person becomes capable of doing kapālabhāti non-stop for 5 minutes. Kapālabhāti must be done for 5 minutes in one sitting. One cannot get full benefit if it is done for a lesser time. With the increase in capacity after a long practice as well as with the maturity of experience one can do kapālabhāti prāṇāyāma up to 15 minutes. A healthy and even slightly sick person should do kapālabhāti for 15 minutes. In three rounds in 15 minutes kapālabhāti is done 900 times.

Persons suffering from incurable diseases like cancer, AIDS, hepatitis, leucoderma, vitiligo, psoriasis, excessive obesity, infertility, cysts/nodules in uterus, ovary, breast or any where in the body, MS and SLE should do kapālabhāti for half an hour. It would be better if such incurable patients do kapālabhāti for half an hour both in the morning and evening. For healthy and slightly sick persons once a day is sufficient.

### **Benefits**

It increases glow, radiance, lustre and beauty of the face and brain.

All kapha disorders like asthma, respiratory diseases, allergy, sinusitis etc are cured.

All the diseases of heart, lungs and brain are cured.

Obesity, diabetes, flatulence, constipation, acidity and kidney

and prostate diseases are definitely cured.

With the regular practice of this prāṇāyāma for about 5 minutes daily, an obstinate disease like constipation is cured. Diabetes can be regulated without any medicine and the weight due to abdominal fat can be reduced by 4-6 kgs in one month. Blockages in the arteries of heart are removed.

The mind remains stabilized, serene and cheerful. Negative thinking disappears and one gets rid of depression.

The cakras are cleansed and a divine energy starts circulating in all the cakras, right from mulādhāra cakra (pelvic plexus) to sahasrāra cakra (cerebral gland).

This prāṇāyāma especially improve the health of stomach, pancreas, liver, spleen, intestines, prostate and kidneys. Even if one does not get much benefit by doing many āsanas for stomach disorders, he can be benefited more than all the āsanas by doing only this prāṇāyāma. This is the best prāṇāyāma for giving strength to weak intestines.

### **Third procedure : Bāhya Prāṇāyāma (with three bandhas) :**

#### **Method:**

Sit properly in siddhāsana or padmāsana and throw the breath out, as much as you can, in one go.

After throwing the breath out, apply mūlabandha, uddīyāna bandha and jālandhara bandha, and hold the breath out as much as you can.

When you feel like breathing in, take the breath while relaxing the bandhas slowly.

After taking in the breath, throw it out again as before, without holding it up.

#### **The noble resolution (śiva saṅkalpa) during bāhya prāṇāyāma**

Like kapālabhāti, in this prāṇāyāma also all the disorders and doṣas are being expelled while breathing out, this is what we should say to ourselves. We should know it for certain that the stronger is our power of thinking, the sooner will disappear all our afflictions. If our mind is inspired by a noble resolution, all our mental and physical diseases will be eradicated and we will be benefited all over.

### **Duration of bāhya prāṇāyāma**

Filling in the breath effortlessly in 3-5 seconds, throwing it out effortlessly in 3-5 seconds, holding it out for 10-15 seconds, and again filling it in 3-5 seconds and doing bāhya prāṇāyāma by exhaling it, in this way bāhya prāṇāyāma is completed in about 20-25 seconds. It is better if two bāhya prāṇāyāmas are done non-stop one after the other. If in the beginning one has to take 1-2 normal breaths between two prāṇāyāmas, one may take them. Normally one can easily do bāhya prāṇāyāma 5 times in 2 minutes, and that is generally sufficient. Persons suffering from rectal prolapse, piles, fissure, fistula, vaginal prolapse, excessive urination, scanty urination and venereal diseases can practise it up to 11 times. Seekers desirous of awakening kuṇḍalinī and of being ūrdhvaretā (with upward movement of semen) may practise it maximum 21 times.

### **Benefits**

It is a harmless prāṇāyāma. It dispels the instability of mind. It improves the digestive power and is beneficial in stomach ailments. It makes the intellect sharp and subtle. It cleanses the body. By promoting the upward movement of semen, it removes the sexual disorders like nocturnal emissions, quick ejaculation, etc. In bāhya prāṇāyāma all the organs in the abdomen are strained a lot and slight pain is felt in the weak or diseased part of the abdomen in the beginning. Therefore, for giving some relaxation and therapy to the abdomen this prāṇāyāma should be done by applying the three bandhas.

### **Fourth procedure: Ujjāyi Prāṇāyāma**

In this prāṇāyāma we contract the throat while doing the pūraka (inhaling) and when we breathe in by contracting the throat, we make a sound like snoring. We sit in a meditative pose and breathe in through both the nostrils. With some contraction of the throat we feel the friction of air in the throat. There should not be any friction of air in the nose. A sound is produced with the friction in the throat. In the beginning we should practise only pūraka- recaka (inhaling-exhaling) without applying kumbhaka (holding in). After the pūraka we should practise the kumbhaka gradually as long as the pūraka, and after practising for some days we should double the duration of kumbhaka. If the kumbhaka is to be done for more than 10 seconds, we should apply jālandhara- bandha and mūlabandha as well. In this

prāṇāyāma we should always do the recaka (exhaling) with the left nostril and keep the right nostril closed.

### **Benefits**

This prāṇāyāma is beneficial for those who suffer from colds, cough and catarrh throughout the year, for those who suffer from thyroid problems, snoring, sleep apnoea, heart disease, asthma, lungs diseases, for those who suffer from throat problems like tonsillitis, thyroid glands, etc, and for those who suffer from insomnia, mental stress, hypertension, dyspepsia, rheumatism, dropsy, tuberculosis, fever, spleen disorders, etc. It should be practised regularly to keep the throat fit, healthy and melodious. It is an excellent prāṇāyāma for awakening kuṇḍalinī, ajapā- japa, meditation, etc. It also rectifies the lispy (defective) speech of children.

### **Fifth procedure: Anuloma- Viloma Prāṇāyāma Method of closing the alternate nostrils**

Raise your right hand and with its thumb close the right nostril (piṅgalā nāḍī) and while closing the left nostril use the ring finger and middle finger of the right hand. The palm of the hand should not be in front of the nose; it should instead be held away to the right side. (Vide Illustrations Nos. 2 and 3 at the outset).

Since idā nāḍī (left nostril) represents moon, lunar power, coolness and calmness, anuloma- viloma prāṇāyāma is started from the left nostril for cleansing the nāḍī (energy channel). Closing the right nostril with the right hand thumb, we should gently fill the breath inside through the left nostril. When the inhalation is complete, we should close the left nostril with the ring finger and middle finger of the right hand and exhale completely through the right nostril. The rate of inhalation-exhalation should gradually be increased from medium to vigorous. Inhale vigorously with full force and then exhale. Make the rate of inhaling and exhaling slow, medium or fast according to your capacity. If you do pūraka (inhaling) and recaka (exhaling) at a fast rate, there is a loud sound of breathing. After you have exhaled completely, keeping the left nostril closed, fill in complete breath through the right nostril and exhale it through the left nostril. Thus, one set is completed. You have to do this procedure non-stop, i.e. inhaling through the left nostril and exhaling through the right nostril, and then inhaling through the right nostril and

exhaling through the left nostril. One starts feeling tired by repeating this series for one minute. When you feel tired, take some rest and begin the prāṇāyāma again when you feel better. Thus you can begin this prāṇāyāma by doing for 3 minutes and go up to 10 minutes. After practising regularly for a few days the capacity of a learner starts increasing, and in about a week he can do this prāṇāyāma non-stop up to five minutes.

With the constant practice of anuloma- viloma the energy lying in the mūlādhāra cakra (pelvic plexus) starts awakening. Vedas call it being ūrdhvaretas (one with an upward movement of semen), and in the language of modern yoga it is known as 'kuṇḍalinī jāgaraṇa' (awakening of serpent energy). While doing this prāṇāyāma one should chant and meditate upon 'OM' in his mind with each inhalation-exhalation. By doing so, the mind gets situated in the sublime state of dhyāna (meditation).

#### **The noble resolution (śiva saṅkalpa) during anuloma viloma**

While doing this prāṇāyāma, you should think in your mind that with the friction and churning of breath in iḍā and piṅgalā nāḍīs, suṣumṇā nāḍī is getting awakened. From the eight cakras right up to the sahasrāra cakra (cerebral gland) a celestial light is moving upward.

My whole body is aglow with a celestial light. As per illustration No. 16, one should meditate upon a celestial light, illumination and energy inside and outside the body, and realise 'om khaṁ brahma'. One should think that God, the controller of universe, is suffusing him with divine energy and divine knowledge. Initiate yourself into the discipline of 'śaktipāta'. Guru (preceptor) is only a catalyst for attaining śakti (energy); he only connects you to divine vibrations. In fact, 'śaktipāta' (instilling of energy) is done by OM, the Supreme Lord, the limitless ocean of energy. Thus, by practising this anuloma-viloma prāṇāyāma, by getting suffused with divine vibrations, one will be blessed with a lot of physical, mental and spiritual benefit. A light will stir up automatically from mūlādhāra cakra (pelvic plexus), kuṇḍalinī will awaken, you will become 'ūrdhvareta' (one with upward movement of semen) and will find yourself automatically suffused with divine energy.

#### **Duration of anuloma- viloma prāṇāyāma**

Filling in the breath with a rhythmic flow for about 2½ seconds

through the left nostril, and without holding it up, throwing the breath out gently through the right nostril in about 2½ seconds, and immediately after throwing it out through the right nostril, filling in the breath effortlessly through the right nostril in 2½ seconds, and without holding it up, throwing it out in a rhythmic flow through the left nostril in about 2½ seconds. this procedure should be done non-stop for about 5 minutes. although it may be a bit tiresome in the beginning. Don't use too much of force and don't raise the elbow too high while doing anuloma-viloma – this will enable you gradually in 5-7 days to practise anuloma-viloma for 5 minutes at a stretch.

One set of anuloma-viloma prāṇāyāma will be performed in 10 seconds, i.e., 6 times in one minute. In a sitting of 5 minutes anuloma-viloma is performed about 30 times, and if a healthy person or a person suffering from light common ailments does it for the prescribed duration of 15 minutes, it will be performed about 90 times. Persons suffering from incurable diseases like cancer, leucoderma / vitiligo, psoriasis, muscular dystrophy, SLE, infertility, HIV, AIDS, kidney diseases, etc. should practise anuloma-viloma prāṇāyāma up to 30 minutes. When the practice gets perfected anulom-viloma prāṇāyāma can be done for 15 minutes or even half an hour at a stretch.

### **Benefits**

This prāṇāyāma cleanses seventy-two crore, seventy-two lakh, ten thousand, two hundred ten nāḍīs (energy channels). With the cleansing of all the nāḍīs the body becomes completely healthy, radiant and strong.

All the vāta diseases like arthritis, rheumatism, gout, Parkinson's Disease, nervous debility, etc., all pitta diseases like urinary diseases, tissue diseases, spermatorrhea, emissions, hyperacidity, heart burn, skin rashes etc., all kapha diseases like colds, catarrh, chronic rhinitis, sinusitis, asthma, cough, tonsils, etc., are cured. All the three doṣas are pacified.

Blockages in the arteries of heart are removed. With the regular practice of this prāṇāyāma, almost 30-40% blockages are removed in 3-4 months. We have tried it on a number of patients.

All disorders of cholesterol, triglycerides, HDL, LDL, etc are removed.

Negative thinking is transformed into increasingly positive

thinking. One starts attaining bliss, zest and fearlessness.

In short, this prāṇāyāma purifies the body, the mind, the thoughts and the dispositions. All the diseases of the body are cured, and the mind is cleansed and gets absorbed in the meditation of 'omkāra'.

By doing this prāṇāyāma 250-500 times, the serpent power (kuṇḍalinī śakti) which lies with head downward in the pelvic plexus (mūlādhāra cakra) holds its head upward, and the process of kuṇḍalinī- awakening sets in.

### **N.B.**

To know more about it and the precautions related to it, please refer to the chapter 'Ways of kundalini- awakening and precautions'.

### **Sixth Procedure: Bhrāmarī Prāṇāyāma**

Inhale completely, press lightly at the root of the nose near the eyes with the middle fingers of both hands, keep the mind centred on the medullary plexus (ājñā- cakra). Close both the ears completely with thumbs. (Vide Illustration No.4 at the outset). Now, humming like a bee and resonating 'OM', breathe out. Repeat this procedure.

### **The noble resolution (śiva saṅkalpa) during bhrāmarī prāṇāyāma**

This prāṇāyāma should be done by identifying your consciousness with divine consciousness and God's existence. One should have in one's mind this divine resolution or thought that God's compassion, peace and bliss is raining on him. God is enriching him with pure intellect (ṛambharā prajñā) by dispelling all his ignorance with His divine light illumining his ājñā cakra (medullary plexus). Thus by doing this prāṇāyāma with pure intentions one feels a nebula of light in his ājñā - cakra and starts going into meditation automatically.

### **Duration of bhrāmarī prāṇāyāma**

Inhaling for 3-5 seconds, and closing the ears, eyes, etc, as per the procedure, breathing it out in 15-20 seconds, makes one set of bhrāmarī prāṇāyāma. After completing one set, one should again breathe in for 3-5 seconds with a rhythmic flow, and humming like a bee breathe it out in 15-20 seconds according to procedure. Thus, everybody should do bhrāmarī prāṇāyāma at least 5-7 times non-stop, which will take about 3 minutes. Those who are suffering from cancer, depression, Parkinson's Disease, migraine, heart disease and some other incurable disease or who are desirous of fathoming the

depths of yoga can do bhrāmarī prāṇāyāma 11-21 times.

### **Benefits**

It dispels the instability/ fickleness of mind and is beneficial in mental tension, agitation, high B.P, heart disease, etc. It is very useful for meditation.

### **Seventh procedure : Udgītha Prāṇāyāma**

Inhale for 3-5 seconds in a rhythmic flow, and breathe it out in about 15-20 seconds while chanting the sacred word 'OM' methodically. After one chanting is complete one should again breathe deep inside for 3-5 seconds in a rhythmic flow and breathe it out in 15-20 seconds chanting 'OM'. Thus, everybody must do udgītha prāṇāyāma about 7 times in about 3 minutes. Those who are suffering from incurable diseases and the learners (sādhakas) desirous of fathoming the depths of meditation can do udgītha prāṇāyāma for 5-10 minutes or even longer. Both bhrāmarī and udgītha are gentle and effortless prāṇāyāmas. Therefore, if a sādhaka practises them for longer duration there is no possibility of any sort of harm.

### **Eighth Procedure : Praṇava Prāṇāyāma**

After doing all the aforesaid prāṇāyāmas, concentrate your mind on inhalation and exhalation, and meditate upon udgītha (OM) with your prāṇa. God has made poles in the shape of 'Omkāra'. This piṇḍa (body) and this brahmāṇḍa (universe) – both are in the form of 'Omkāra'. 'Omkāra' is not a particular person or figure; it is a divine power which is controlling and regulating the whole universe. Turn yourself into a spectator (=Soul) and while inhaling deeply and exhaling subtly your respiration rate should be so subtle that you do not feel like hearing the sound of your breath, and even if one puts a cotton swab before your nose it should not shake or quiver. Gradually increase the practice and try to breathe in and breathe out once in one minute. Thus, try to look at the breath inside. In the beginning the friction of breath will be felt on the tip of nose. Gradually you shall be able to feel the touch of breath deep inside you. Thus, by chanting 'Omkāra' with every breath as a spectator (=Soul), one starts going into meditation automatically. Your mind will become highly one-pointed, absorbed in and identified with 'Omkāra'. Along with 'praṇava' the great Gāyatrī mantra from the Vedas should be chanted and recited, imbibing its meaning. Thus,

through meditation a seeker can become identified with Brahman, the very essence of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss, and can attain the unique divine ecstasy of samādhi. Even while going to bed one should meditate into sleep, By doing this his sleep will be blessed with yoga; he will get rid of nightmares and will have a quick and sound sleep.

### **Duration of praṇava prāṇāyāma**

When as a spectator (=Soul) we concentrate our mind on the rhythmic flow of breaths, the prāṇa gets subtle automatically, and we inhale once in 10-20 seconds and exhale in 10-20 seconds. Through long practice a yogi takes one breath in one minute. After bhastrikā, kapālabhāti, bāhya prāṇāyāma, anuloma-viloma, bhrāmarī and udgītha, this praṇava prāṇāyāma is done, which is another form of vipaśyanā or prekṣā dhyāna. It is completely meditation-based. Everybody must do this meditation-based prāṇāyāma. Yogis practising samādhi do this penance of breathing accompanied with meditation of praṇava for hours together, according to the availability of time. There is no sound of breathing in this procedure, i.e., this soundless penance takes a seeker into the deep silence within, where his senses merge in the mind, the mind in the prāṇa and the prāṇa in the Soul, and through Soul a seeker realizes the universal Soul, supreme Soul and Brahman. It is the path which has prāṇāyāma as its starting point from where it gradually and spontaneously leads from the constant practice of prāṇāyāma to pratyāhāra (withdrawal), from the constant practice of pratyāhāra to dhāraṇā (concentration), from the firm and constant practice of dhāraṇā to dhyāna (meditation), and from the constant practice of dhyāna to samādhi (absorption). With this prāṇa-sādhana (prāṇāyāma), there is a union of dhāraṇa, dhyāna and samādhi, and saṁyama is attained (**trayamekatra saṁyamaḥ**). From saṁyama a sādhanā attains prajñāloka, which gives him self-healing, which ultimately blesses him with the experience of self-realization. He is encompassed by a dazzling aura which works as an impenetrable armour to protect the sādhanā (seeker) from all diseases, disorders and polluting influences.



## OTHER PRĀṆĀYĀMAS USEFUL FOR TREATING THE DISEASES

### 1. Sūryabhedī or Sūryāṅga Prāṇāyāma

Sit in a meditative pose, do the pūraka (inhaling) through the right nostril, then do the kumbhaka (holding in) by applying jālandhara bandha and mūlabandha, and in the end do the recaka (exhaling) through the left nostril. The duration of antaḥkumbhaka (holding in) should gradually be increased. This prāṇāyāma should be done 3, 5 or 7 times, and up to 10 after practising for some time. While doing kumbhaka one should meditate on the radiance of sun. In summer season, this prāṇāyāma should be done for a short duration.

#### Benefits

It increases heat and pitta (bile) in the body. It is beneficial in vāta- and kapha- origin diseases, blood and skin disorders, worms in stomach, leprosy, gonorrhoea, contagious diseases, dyspepsia, indigestion, female diseases, etc. It helps awaken kuṇḍalinī and delays the onset of old age. This prāṇāyāma should be done for a short duration after anuloma-viloma. By doing sūryabhedī prāṇāyāma without kumbhaka, heart rate and work efficiency of the body improve and weight is reduced, for which it is essential to do 27 rounds twice a day.

### 2. Candrabhedī or Candrāṅga Prāṇāyāma

In this prāṇāyāma, do the pūraka (inhaling) through the left nostril, and then do the antaḥ-kumbhaka (holding in, retaining the breath). It is better to do it with jālandhara-bandha and mūlabandha. Then do the recaka (exhaling) through the right nostril. In this prāṇāyāma the pūraka is always done through candrasvara (left nostril) and the recaka through sūryasvara (right nostril). Sūryabhedī is just opposite. While doing the kumbhaka, meditate on the light of full moon. It should be practised for a short duration in winter season.

#### Benefit

With the feeling of coolness in the body, fatigue and heat are relieved. It calms the agitations of mind. It is useful in the burning felt due to pitta.

### 3. Karṇarogāntaka Prāṇāyāma

In this prāṇāyāma, after doing the pūraka (inhaling) through both nostrils, we close the mouth and both nostrils and push the inhaled air out, It is like making an effort to breathe out through the ears. When the air presses toward the ears, there is automatically a sort of sound in the ears. Give 4-5 upward pushes to the breath and then do the recaka (exhaling) through both nostrils. It is sufficient to do it 2-3 times.

#### Benefits

It is beneficial for ear diseases and especially cures deafness.

### 4. Śītalī Prāṇāyāma

Sit in a meditative pose with your hands resting on the knees. Corrugating (shaping into a groove) your tongue and keeping your mouth open, do the pūraka (inhaling) through the mouth. Drawing the breath inside slowly through the groove in the tongue fill the lungs completely. Retain it for a few moments and then closing the mouth, do the recaka (exhaling) through both nostrils. Afterwards, corrugating the tongue, do the pūraka through the mouth and the recaka through the nose. Thus, as required for the disease, it can be done 5-10 times. Practise it less in the winter.

#### Special Instructions

You can also apply jālandhara-bandha while doing the kumbhaka (retaining). Persons with kapha constitution and those with tonsil disorders should not do śītalī and sītkārī prāṇāyāmas.

#### Benefits

It is beneficial for the diseases of tongue, mouth and throat. Abdominal tumors, spleen disorders, fever, dyspepsia, etc are cured.

By perfecting it one conquers hunger-thirst, this is what the yoga scriptures say.

It lowers the high B.P., is useful in the diseases of pitta origin, and also purifies the blood.

### 5. Sītkārī Prāṇāyāma

Sit in a meditative pose, stick your tongue to the ceiling of your palate clench the upper and lower teeth and keep the lips open. Now gradually making the 'sī, sī' sound, breathe in through the mouth

and fill the lungs completely. Apply jālandhara-bandha and stay as long as you can conveniently. Then close the mouth and gently do the rceaka through the nose. Repeat this likewise. It can be practised according to one's disease or need.

### **Special Instructions**

This prāṇāyāma can be practised without kumbhaka and jālandhara bandha.

During the pūraka, the teeth and tongue should remain unmoved at their prescribed position.

### **Benefits**

Its modes, properties and benefits are like śītalī prāṇāyāma.

Besides curing dental diseases and pyorrhea, etc., it cures the diseases of throat, mouth, nose and tongue.

Sleeping duration is reduced and the body remains cool.

It is beneficial in high B.P., if done 10-20 times.

### **6. Mūrccā Prāṇāyāma**

In this prāṇāyāma, while doing the pūraka (inhaling) with both nostrils we close our eyes and throw our head backward so that the gaze is fixed at the sky. Then we apply antaḥ- kumbhaka, and in the end we bring our head into normal position and gently do the recaka (exhaling). Again, without taking rest we do the pūraka, sky- gazing, kumbhaka—all of them together, and resume the earlier position. It is sufficient to do it 5 times daily.

### **Benefits**

It is beneficial for headache, migraine, Parkinson's Disease, nervous debility, etc. It is useful for improving the eyesight and memory. It helps awaken kuṇḍalinī and is helpful in meditation by turning the mind inward.

### **7. Plāvinī Prāṇāyāma**

It is a sort of vāyu- dhauti (air wash). As you drink water with your mouth, similarly keep on sucking air till the whole abdomen is filled with it. Then you have to burp (belch) so that the whole sucked in air is thrown out of the abdomen. By sucking in air, the polluted air is expelled from the mouth.

### **Benefits**

It helps cure all stomach ailments and hysteria. It destroys the worms and improves the appetite/ digestive system. Polluted air is expelled.

### **8. Kevalī Prāṇāyāma**

In this prāṇāyāma, only pūraka-recaka (inhaling-exhaling) is done, not the kumbhaka (retaining). The word 'OM' is mentally resonated during pūraka (inhaling) as well as recaka (exhaling). Thus with each inhalation and exhalation the mental 'ajapā- japa' of 'OM' in the form of 'udgītha' goes on incessantly.

### **Benefit**

Concentration is achieved soon and 'ajapā- japa' is perfected.

### **9. Nāḍī- śodhana Prāṇāyāma**

To start with, in nāḍī- śodhana prāṇāyāma, like anuloma-viloma prāṇāyāma, we should close the right nostril and inhale gently through the left nostril. When the inhalation is completed we should hold the prāṇa inside according to our capacity and apply mūlabandha and jālandhara- bandha. We should breathe out very gently through the right nostril. When the exhalation is completed, we should inhale gently through the right nostril and do antaḥkumbhaka (holding in). Holding in the breath as per our capacity, we should gently breathe out through our left nostril. Thus one round or one set of nāḍī-śodhana prāṇāyāma is completed. If this procedure is done with mental concentration without touching the nostrils with your hand, it is more beneficial, because in this way the concentration of your mind is centred on prāṇa and the mind attains absolute stability. There should not be any sound of breathing while inhaling and exhaling. This prāṇāyāma must be done at least 1-3 times, even more at will. The ratio of pūraka, antaḥkumbhaka and recaka in nāḍī-śodhana prāṇāyāma in the beginning should as much as possible be 1: 2: 2; i.e., if we do the pūraka in 10 seconds, we should do the antaḥkumbhaka for 20 seconds, and then gently do the recaka (exhaling) in 20 seconds. Afterwards take this ratio to 1: 4: 2. When you have reached this level, you can also add bāhya- kumbhaka (holding the breath out) to it, i.e., now the ratio of pūraka, antaḥkumbhaka, recaka and bāhyakumbhaka will be 1: 4: 2: 2.

This prāṇāyāma should be done at a very slow speed. The longer and subtler the speed of prāṇa (breath), by doing this prāṇāyāma effortlessly without being particular about the number of times you do it, the more beneficial will it be for you. Inhaling, exhaling and retaining as per your capacity is the real ratio factor in this prāṇāyāma. If you do it this way, you don't need any rest in between. While doing pūraka, kumbhaka and recaka, you should do in your mind japa (recitation) and meditation of 'OM' or Gāyatrī Mantra.

### **Benefits**

All the benefits are like those of anuloma-viloma prāṇāyāma. It is especially beneficial in muscular dystrophy, MS, SLE, polio, neuropathy and auto-immune disease. This prāṇāyāma helps control the senses, mind and prāṇa.



## ENERGY CENTRES OR CAKRAS LOCATED IN THE BODY

The cakras located in human body are the centres of various types of marvellous powers. All these cakras are linked together starting from the root to the top of the spinal cord. In normal state they lie undeveloped with face downward, like an unblown lotus. When they blow up with face upward, on getting the right stimulus through observance of celibacy, prāṇāyāma and yogic procedures like meditation etc., their supernatural powers are developed. The concrete pictures of cakras are merely symbolical in conveying the idea of their subtle nature. Similarly the English terminology like pelvic plexus, etc does not convey their actual location; it gives a mere indication.

### A Brief Description of Cakras

The holy Atharvaveda says about cakras :

**aṣṭācakrā navadvārā devānām pūrayodhyā /  
tasyām hiraṇyayaḥ kośaḥ svargo jyotiṣāvṛtaḥ //**

(ATHARVAVEDA: 10.2.31)

In this body (Ayodhya), the gods' city, there are eight turnpikes (cakras) and nine gates (two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, mouth, anus, urinary organ). In this city there is a glittering golden treasure-chest which is overflowing with endless, immense, limitless happiness, peace, bliss and celestial luminosity. Only a seeker practising yoga can get this celestial treasure-chest. Now we give a brief description of cakras.

### 1. Mūlādhāra Cakra (Pelvic / Root Plexus vis- a- vis Reproductive System)

This cakra is located two digits above the base of anus and two digits below the base of urinary organ. Suṣumṇā nāḍī (Sarasvatī) runs through its centre and the Iḍa nāḍī (Gaṅgā) through its left corner. Therefore, it is called 'Mukta Triveṇī'. By virtue of its being the base of root energy, i.e. kuṇḍalinī śakti, it is called 'mūlādhāra cakra'. By meditating on this cakra one develops good health and qualities like efficiency and work-skill. With the awakening of this cakra a man becomes ūrdhvaretā (one with upward movement of semen), radiant

and energetic, and all the diseases of his body are eradicated.

Illustration No. 5 (at the outset) shows that this first cakra, mūlādhāra, is being illuminated by mānasa raśmis (mental rays) kindled by savitā (radiance of intellect). In this spot a soft light as that of a fountain or a torch is emitting from that fibre which runs in front of the svādhiṣṭhāna cakra (hypogastric plexus) up to the mūlādhāra. Tenebrous darkness is deeply rooted here. This darkness is dispelled by cultivation of prāṇa and dhāraṇā-dhyāna (concentration-meditation), and mūlādhāra is illuminated. This illumination lays bare all the grossness and subtlety held in the mūlādhāra. This is also called 'kuṇḍalinī jāgaraṇa' (awakening of serpent power). Illustration No. 5 shows (1) top of suṣumṇā, (2) lower part of the abdomen linked with this cakra, (3) pink coloured small intestines, (4) yellow coloured large intestines, (5) pelvis in the lower part of large intestines (rectum and anus), (6) coccyx (lower end of the vertebral column), (7) lower passage of suṣumṇā, (8) suṣumṇā (main fibre), the lower end of suṣumṇā, (9) all the mūlādhāra region being illuminated.

## **2. Svādhiṣṭhāna Cakra (Hypogastric plexus vis- a- vis Excretory system)**

This cakra is located near the hypogastrium two digits above the mūlādhāra cakra. According to Tantra literature, the fruit of meditating on this cakra is the capability of creation, preservation and decimation and invocation of Sarasvatī on one's tongue.

It is clearly shown in Illustration No. 6 (at the outset) that the svādhiṣṭhāna cakra is located in the hypogastrium. This cakra contains the urinary system which comprises (1) right-left kidneys, (2) urinary bladder, (3) the posterior part of urinary organ, (4) urine-carrying ducts branching off the kidneys, in which the green leaves are (5) semen- cells, with the semen- carrying ducts on right and left, the semen- manufacturing mechanism, (6) testes, (7) prostate gland, semen-carrying and urine- carrying ducts and the excretory passage for semen and urine, (8) penis. With the realization of this cakra one gets to know about 'urinary system' and ' seminal system' and their mutual relation.

## **3. Maṇipūra Cakra (Epigastric Plexus or Solar Plexus vis- a- vis Digestive System)**

It is located at the root of navel. This cakra provides energy to the

whole digestive system (liver, intestines, etc.) and pancreas, etc. In a Yogadarśana Sūtra: **nābhicakre kāyavyūhajñānam** (3.22), the fruit of meditating on the navel centre has been stated to be the knowledge of anatomy, i.e., the knowledge of the location of various organs in the body. With the awakening of this cakra, diabetes, constipation, indigestion, flatulence—all disorders of metabolism are cured.

Illustration No. 7 (at the outset) shows the location of maṇipūra cakra. It is located behind the navel and comprises (1) stomach, (2) liver, (3) spleen, (4) pancreas, and (5) small bowel.

#### **4. Hṛdaya Cakra or Nimna Manaścakra (Lower Mind Plexus vis- a- vis Skeleton System)**

This cakra is located near the heart. The Tantra literature speaks of oratorical skills, poetic talent and conquest over senses among its benefits. Śivasāratāntra says that the anāhata dhvani (anhad nād, unstruck sound) originating from this spot is udgītha (Omkāra) which is always beneficent to all. This cakra is appropriate for concentration (dhāraṇā) and meditation (dhyāna) by women and sentimental devotees. One who meditates on this cakra can never suffer from heart disease. (Vide illustration No.8 at the outset).

#### **5. Anāhata Cakra (Cardiac Plexus vis- a- vis Circulatory System)**

This cakra is located between the two breasts. With the awakening and becoming healthy of mūlādhāra, svādhiṣṭhāna and maṇipūra cakras, this cakra is automatically awakened. As a result of its awakening, bones and muscles start getting healthy and strong. Divine virtues like love, compassion, service and sympathy are developed by meditating on this cakra. Mahārṣi Vyāsa also exhorts about meditating on the hṛdaya cakra. It is not the gross but the emotional aspect of heart, which is related to the mind or psyche of a person. (Vide Illustration No.9)

In Illustration No.9 (at the outset), anāhata cakra has been magnified. The central spheres of the heart-lotus (hṛdaya puṇḍarīka) have been clearly shown here.

#### **6. Viśuddhi Cakra (Carotid Plexus vis- a- vis Respiratory System)**

Its location is in the throat. By meditating on this cakra and on its awakening one becomes a poet, savant, healthy person, free of

sorrows and long- living. With the awakening of this cakra one does not suffer from thyroid and lung diseases. Illustration No. 10 (at the outset) describes the viśuddhi cakra in which the numbers in 'A' section show the trachea (1) and the relation between the interiors of both lungs (4).

### 7. Ājñā Cakra (Medullary Plexus vis- a- vis Nervous system)

This cakra is located in the middle spot between the two eyebrows. With prāṇāyāmas like kapālabhāti, anuloma-viloma, nāḍīśodhana, etc., the mind and prāṇa become calm and stable which makes the autonomic and voluntary nervous system tranquil, healthy and balanced. The whole nāḍī system is connected with the ājñā cakra. With the awakening of ājñā cakra the nāḍī system becomes completely healthy and strong. Idā, piṅgalā and suṣumṇā flowing upward as separate streams out of the mūlādhāra cakra (pelvic plexus) make a confluence on this spot (i.e., ājñā cakra). Therefore, this spot is also called Triveṇī. In Illustration No. 10 in the beginning of this book, the two ball- like things in section B represent the spot of ājñā cakra; the light with the upward flame is that of suṣumṇā.

**idā bhāgīrathī gaṅgā piṅgalā yamunā nādī /  
tayormadhyagatā nāḍī suṣumṇākhyā sarasvatī //  
triveṇī- saṅgamo yatra tīrtharājaḥ sa ucyate /  
tatra snānaṁ prakurvīta sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate //**

(JÑĀNASĀṆKALINĪTANTRA)

Idā is called Gaṅgā, piṅgalā Yamunā, and the suṣumṇā nāḍī running between the two is called Sarasvatī. The spot of confluence of this Triveṇī is called Tīrtharāja. The seeker who immerses himself in it is purged of all his sins. This Triveṇī-confluence is not outside; it is inside us. 'A person is purged of his sins by immersing himself in the worldly (outside) Triveṇī- it is an illusion, a fallacy. If that be possible, then anybody murdering a brahmin, preceptor or brother, etc. should be purged of his sins by taking a dip in Triveṇī Saṅgama, but it does not happen. Sin (pāpa) means 'crime, misdeed' which causes harm to others. Therefore, one has to bear the fruit (penalty) of sin. After committing a sin, even if you do a meritorious deed in the form of an atonement, you have to bear different types of returns/ rewards-unhappiness as the reward for sins and happiness as the reward for meritorious deeds. Therefore, the scriptures say:

**avaśyameva bhoktavyam kṛtam karma śubhāśubham.** But if a person sincerely bathes in Gaṅgā or Triveṇī, and after the bath makes this resolution that he is not going to commit any sinful deed throughout his life, he can be saved from sin in the future by dint of his sacred vow and resolution. But one cannot escape the sin committed until now. This is what we have to say about external Triveṇī, but if a person fixes his mind in the Triveṇī- saṅgama located in the ajñā cakra by practising prāṇāyāma and meditation and immerses himself in God's devotion and the Gaṅgā of knowledge, there is hardly any possibility of his committing a sin. Therefore, if we really want to get rid of sins, we should daily fix our mind in the ajñā cakra and practise yoga, chanting and reciting omkāra.

### **8. Sahasrāra Cakra (Endocrine System)**

This cakra located in the cerebrum above the fontanelle (brahmarandhra) is the centre of all divine powers. By fixing and restraining the prāṇa (life–breath) and mind on this cakra, the mental modifications, viz. pramāṇa (correct knowledge), viparyaya (mistaken knowledge), vikalpa (illusory/ imaginary knowledge), nidrā (dreamless sleep) and smṛti (remembering), are restrained, and asamprajñāta (ultra-cognitive) samādhi is attained. All the endocrine glands, including the pituitary and the pineal, are connected with the sahasrāra cakra. With the awakening of the sahasrāra cakra the whole endocrine system gets balanced.

Yoga scholars maintain that the thumb- size hṛdaya- puruṣa alluded to in the Upaniṣads is nothing else but this brahmarandhra, above which the sahasrāra cakra is located. This is where the Mind resides, and which is being illuminated by the light of knowledge of the Soul.

Where does the Soul (jīvātmā) reside in the body? It is a complicated question whether the light of knowledge of the Soul illumines the Mind (citta). The Mind (citta) is, in a way, subtle body. Only on getting coupled with this subtle body the Soul is called jīvātmā (embodied soul). The causal body permeates the subtle body. Thus jīvātmā permeates the whole body. Even then, due to its different functions, it is said to reside in several places.

Normally in the sleeping state (suṣupti- avasthā) the jīvātmā resides in heart- region (hṛdaya deśa) because heart is the main centre of the

body. From here the nāḍīs branch off to the whole body. The internal workings of the body stop at this point. Therefore, in the sleeping state (suṣupti- avasthā) the jīvātmā can be said to be residing in the heart. Upaniṣads also say this:

**yatraiṣa etat supto 'bhūd ya eṣa vijñānamayaḥ  
puruṣastadeṣām prāṇānām vijñānena vijñānamādāya  
ya eṣo' ntarhṛdaya ākāśastasmiñchete (BRHAD. 2.1.96)**

"When this puruṣa (=Soul), who is full of supreme intellect (vijñāna), is in sound sleep, then by the vijñāna of senses, along with vijñāna, he rests in the space which is there in the heart."

In the dream state (svapnāvasthā) the jīva (embodied soul) resides in the throat, because the size of impressions of the objects seen, heard or enjoyed in the awakened state is one thousandth of the thickness of a hair. Therefore, in the dream state the subtle perception in the form of impressions of experienced objects is in the throat, because in the awakened state the jīvātmā perceives the external objects by external sense organs in which eyes hold a prominent place; therefore, in the awakened state the jīvātmā is said to be residing in the eyes.

**ya eṣo 'kṣiṇi puruṣo dṛsyata eṣa ātmeti. (CHĀNDO. 1.2.6)**

"This puruṣa that is seen in the eye is ātmā." In samprajñāta (cognitive samādhi) the jīvātmā can be said to reside in ājñā- cakra (because this is the repository of divine vision). This is also called divyanetra or 'Śivanetra'. In asamprajñāta (ultra-cognitive) samādhi, the jīvātmā is said to reside in brahmarandhra. When the Mind and the Prāṇa are stabilized on this, then asamprajñāta (ultra-cognitive) samādhi, i.e. the restraining of all vṛttis, is attained. In Illustration No 10 (at the outset), section B, (1) topmost end of suṣumṇā, (2) cerebellum, (3) the 'Sheath of Intellect' or 'subtle body,' a conglomerate of mind+intellect+ 10 sense organs, surrounded by 5 tanmātras (subtle elements), (4) brahmarandhra (sahasrāra), (5) part of cerebrum, where '3' (marked in red) is called the 'adhipati randhra'.



## KUṆḌALINĪ-ŚAKTI (SERPENT POWER)

The divine power lying in the mūlādhāra cakra has been called kuṇḍalinī śakti (serpent power) in the latter-day Tantra literature, and brahmavarcas (radiance of brahman) in the Vedic literature. Normally prāṇaśakti (life force) flows through idā and piṅgalā nāḍīs only. When one practises prāṇāyāma and yogic procedures like meditation, etc. with proper restraint, then the marvellous power lying dormant in suṣumṇā nāḍī starts developing. The power which was being consumed in sensual enjoyments is transformed by the practice of yoga and it starts moving upward. Philosophers like Plato and Pythagoras have given a similar hint in their writings that there lies a divine power near the navel which illumines the sovereignty of cerebrum, ie. the light of intellect, by which divine powers start developing in a person.

### CAKRA-ŚODHANA (CLEANSING OF CAKRAS) OR KUṆḌALINĪ JĀGARAṆA (AWAKENING OF SERPENT POWER)

Whatever energy is in the cosmos (brahmāṇḍa), the same exists in this body-**yathā piṇḍe tathā brahmāṇḍe**. The main base/support of energy is the mūlādhāra cakra. With the awakening of this cakra the divine energy starts moving upward; this is the awakening of kuṇḍalinī. All the network of electric wires and bulbs, **etc. is controlled by** the main switch. When the main switch is pressed 'on', then the electricity flows into the whole network, and there is light everywhere. Similarly, with the awakening of the divine electrical energy lying dormant in the mūlādhāra cakra, there is an automatic awakening of other cakras.

When this kuṇḍalinī energy ascends and upsurges, one attains samprajñāta (cognitive) samādhi when it reaches particular spots, and when it reaches the sahasrāra cakra, then due to all the vṛitis (movements of the mind) being restrained, one attains asamprajñāta (ultra-cognitive) samādhi. In this very state the divine light of knowledge hidden in the mind starts revealing itself, which makes a seeker attain ṛambharā prajñā (pure intellect) and realize the whole truth. At last, after attaining this ṛambharā prajñā a seeker is blessed

with the immense, eternal bliss of nirbīja samādhi. This is the climax of yoga. On attaining this state, with the eradication of all desires/tendencies in the form of impressions, a sādḥaka lives a liberated existence and enjoys the eternal bliss of liberation.

### **WAYS OF AWAKENING KUṆḌALINĪ**

Under Siddhayoga the awakening of kuṆḍalinī is done by śaktipāta' (bestowing of energy). If one is able to get a highly accomplished ascetic guru, he can bestow that tremendous energy with his mental resolution, and that 'psychic divine energy' permeating the body clusters, and at the time of meditation it becomes a stream of light or activity and flows through the body. This radiance replete with self-consciousness starts functioning as a sentient principle. With the energy bestowed (śaktipāta) by a noble preceptor (sadguru) a seeker does not have to work very hard, his time is saved, and he gains success quickly in his penance (sādhanā). But it is of utmost importance that one gets such an accomplished guru who can bestow energy (śaktipāta). Therefore, at present the awakening of kuṆḍalinī through pranic energy has become quite significant. In yoga, the body is purified in the yoga- fire (yogāgni) by procedures like ṣaṭkarma, āsana, prāṇāyāma, mudrās, bandhas, etc. After the nāḍīs have been cleansed through the disciplining of prāṇa, the sense organs are diverted inward through the practice of pratyāhāra (withdrawal). With the stabilization of mind through dhāraṇā (concentration) a seeker conquers the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and space. Penetrating the cakras and by awakening the kuṆḍalinī through dhyāna (meditation), the embodied soul (jīvātmā) realises Parama Śiva (Supreme Good). If one sits in a meditative pose with the spine erect, the 'prāṇa' starts flowing easily into the nāḍī-plexuses originating from the central spinal cord (suṣumṇā). With a bent spinal cord the nerve-plexuses become contracted and get clogged with unnecessary and obstructive phlegm, etc., and remain unclean due to lack of prāṇa- circulation in them. The disciplining of prāṇa by practising yoga impacts the prāṇamaya kośa (vital air sheath), by which all the parts of prāṇamaya kośa get stimulated and the rate of blood-circulation is accelerated, and then the organs expel through the passages of lungs, skin and eyes the waste products like phlegm, mucus, etc. deposited at various spots. As a result, there are various types of reactions in the body and one feels exhilarated.

In yoga terminology it is prāṇotthāna' (elevation of prāṇa) which is the first rung on the ladder of kuṇḍalinī rising. In this stage there are special sensory experiences originating from the dynamism of prāṇa. With continued practice, in the illumined latter-half of prāṇa-elevation, light is perceived at various spots in the body, and the latter-half of kuṇḍalinī awakening begins. Thus, by the disciplining (sādhanā) of prāṇa, prāṇamaya kośa is realized. All the kośas are linked up with prāṇa. Therefore, with the removal by prāṇāyāma of the impurities deposited in the cakras as well as the screen covering them, one realizes in course of time the cakras located in the body, the processes going on in the cakras, the powers hidden therein, the prāṇas and upa-prāṇas working here and there as well as the iṣus and adhipatis. When, by the continued practice of disciplining the prāṇa, sovereignty is established over the power inhabiting these cakras, then, with the capability of circulating at will the pranic energy from mulādhāra (root plexus) to sahasrāra (crown plexus), it becomes very easy to realize all the cakras and progressively all the kośas (sheaths). In Illustration No. 11 (at the outset), 'Sauṣumṇa Jyoti' shows that with the continued practice of prāṇāyāma the nāḍī-network is purified, and prāṇa and the whole course of suṣumṇā gets illuminated. The light of (2) the mind, impelled by (1) intellect, the main part of the 'subtle body' enclosed in the forehead, moves along the course of the apex for suṣumṇā, and illuminating the whole (4) 'nāḍī-pair', flows through the mūlādhāra cakra (root/pelvic plexus). As the screen of tamas (darkness) decays with the continued practice of disciplining the prāṇa with complete dedication and perseverance, all the cakras, right from mūlādhāra to svādhiṣṭhāna (hypogastric plexus) to sahasrāra (crown plexus) at the top, start getting illuminated. Illustration No.12 (at the outset) shows the form of cakras prior to their being illuminated through perfection of prāṇāyāma. The one lowest at the bottom is showing the prior form of mūlādhāra cakra. The lowest at the bottom is the 'homakuṇḍa-shaped' mūlādhāra and the one above it is svādhiṣṭhāna cakra; the one above this is maṇipūra cakra located in the navel, the waves arising from this cakra surrounded by nāḍīs are those of anāhata śabda (unstruck sound); above this there are hṛdaya cakra and anāhata cakra glowing like the flame of a lamp in the chest; then there is the necklace-shaped viśuddhi cakra in the throat; and then

on the top is sahasrāra cakra shining like a sun in the lotus.

A seeker sees at first only the prior form of these cakras. Later, when he is able to enter the internal body through meditation he attains all the extrasensory introspection and remote-sensing. Illustration No 13(at the outset)-[Form of Divya-dṛṣṭi]: the light of jīvātmā in the (1) psyche (citta) always keeps the psyche and the ego illuminated; impelling the vijñānamaya kośa (intellect sheath) located in the forehead through the pathways (4, 5) it inspires the mind (3), and by bestowing divinity on the inner eye, the mind (6) is making the inner eye (7) divine by its rays (5). The 'divya dṛṣṭi' (divine vision) (8) inspired by the power of determination of yogi reveals all the objects by the illumination of its rays (9) in the space (dyuloka) beyond the solar orb and up to the lowest subterranean world (pātāla) by penetrating into the womb of earth (1-10).

These energy-centres, i.e. cakras, are located in a subtle, seed-form in the luminous nāḍī which runs through the spinal cord and is called suṣumṇā. In Illustration No. 14 (at the outset), the first part shows the mysterious suṣumṇā, in which 1 represents the serpentine 'suṣumṇā' (in red) lying in the serpent-like spinal cord constituted of 33 vertebrae of different sizes. 'A' is the apex (head) of suṣumṇā which is linked to the cerebrum, and 'B' is its tail which joins the tail-bone or coccyx. The internal position of (2) suṣumṇā is being clarified by 'A': the pair of nāḍīs branching out from the middle of two vertebrae and spreading all over the body 'B': Viewing it after cutting off the outer cover of suṣumṇā clarifies the actual position of this nāḍī pair. 'C': It is a cross-section of suṣumṇā. 'D': In the middle of each pair of vertebrae is a cushion (disc) of muscles. 'E': From 'D' to 'E', the nāḍī-pairs emerge in a similar way and are spreading all over the body. 'F': From top to bottom of the spine there are muscle-discs between all the vertebrae. In 3 and 5 there is a cross-section of suṣumṇā showing its internal side where there is a network of cognitive (jñānavahā) and dynamic (gativahā) nāḍīs thinner, subtle than the gossamer. This network works round the clock without resting for a second. In 5, suṣumṇā and along with it the two main nāḍīs 'iḍā' and 'piṅgalā' to its right and left go down from the top and join in front of the pelvic bone. The helix-like iḍā-piṅgalā look like a garland.

The main source of the circulation of vital energy in the whole body

with the combination of 'cognition' (jñāna) and 'action' (kriyā) is only suṣumnā.

**The table at p. 121**

**shows cakras at a glance.**

Thus it is clear that with the awakening of mūlādhāra cakra (root/pelvic plexus) all other cakras (energy centres) start awakening automatically, and the divine energy starts ascending—this is what we call 'kuṇḍalinī jāgaraṇa.' Put in scientific terms, this kuṇḍalinī is that psychic cosmic force which permeates the whole body. A seeker should seek the guidance of some noble accomplished yoga-practitioner, and by disciplining his prāṇa he should cleanse, penetrate and awaken his cakras by the following main procedures:

A seeker desirous of awakening his kuṇḍalinī should practise daily and methodically bhastrikā prāṇāyāma for 5 minutes, kapālabhāti for 30 minutes, bāhya prāṇāyāma 11-21 times and anuloma-viloma for 30 minutes with perseverance, rhythm, absorption, faith and sincerity. In the beginning, when one feels tired one can take rest in between. If one meditates on 'OM' with each breath while doing prāṇāyāma, the goal will be achieved sooner. After anuloma-viloma one must do bhrāmarī and udgītha for 5 minutes each, meditating upon the divine radiance. In the end one must go on inward journey by concentrating the mind along with prāṇa (life-breath). Thus, by meditating upon 'OMKĀRA' along with prāṇa one can reach the highest firmament of yoga. The Japa (repeated recitation) of OMKĀRA, through meditation creates the gradually widening circles of ripples in a sādḥaka. These tickling or thrilling ripples cause electric vibrations (called taḍita due to their being developed on striking= tāḍanā of prāṇa) in svādhiṣṭhāna cakra through the medium of prāṇamaya kośa (nervous system) create a resonance (nāda) (inarticulate sound) in the navel region and a special sort of heat is felt in the stomach. The heat produced in the stomach is transformed into resolution (saṅkalpa). When the special sort of strike-vibration produced by Japa-dhyāna (recitation- meditation) enters the prāṇamaya kośa (nervous system) through the network of nerves in the form of electric waves, then a flow starts from our cerebrum and impacts the

maṅipūra cakra in our navel through the network of nerves.

The purpose behind japa- dhyāna of 'OMKĀRA' is that one should elevate prāṇa from low level to high level, and the intellect and the mind be lifted from the action-packed sphere of prāṇa to the level of vijñānamaya kośa (sheath of intellect) and the 'mind- intellect' be brought to the level of ānandamaya kośa (sheath of bliss) and stabilized there. In other words, gradually dispense with the practice of body, prāṇa, etc., move over the prāṇamaya, manomaya and vijñānamaya kośas, mopping up the 'self- consciousness' permeating the body, stabilize it in 'ānandānugata' (blissful) and 'asmitānugata' (uniting self and intellect into one) samādhis (trances) or get yourself situated in it.

Besides praṇava, one can meditate upon Gāyatrī, the greatest of Vedic mantras, according to Illustration No 15 (at the outset). A sādḥaka (seeker) should try to look inside his cerebellum (kapāla) lying in the cerebrum from the point of view of meditation, and should meditate that his cerebrum is filling up with a divine light at that particular moment, and is now completely filled up, an extremely white light as that of a moonbeam or an unflickering beam of light from a torch is entering into the yellowish- golden coloured sphere of his intellect (2). With the intellect (buddhi), the queen ruling over the vijñānamaya kośa, getting extremely pure and illumined, the 'mind', the sovereign lord of senses, and the "sense organs" subordinate to it are automatically getting cleansed, purified and sanctified. In such a state the ocean of bliss and the supremely serene and immense light in the brain and heart is in full tide day and night.

Besides Omkāra-recitation or Gāyatrī-recitation, a sādḥaka may also meditate upon the divine light (divya āloka) according to Illustration No. 16 (at the outset). The supremely Radiant Thousand-eyed God (1) is bestowing 'brahmateja' on me, and 'brahmateja' is shining like the sun in my heart (2), and that God is in front of me in the form of a pure, graceful light, is manifested in my soul (3). I should always wish that this most divine light may forever illumine the path of my life, and may escort, accompany me throughout my life.



## CAKRAS AT A GLANCE

NAME OF CHAKRAS	GROSS FORM	LOCATION	ELEMENT	SEED SYLLABLE	MAIN VAYU	SECONDARY VAYU	KOŚA (Sheath)	COSMIC SPHERE	DISEASES DUE TO LAXITY OR NON-AWAKENING OF CAKRAS
MULĀDHĀRA	pelvic plexus	approx. 1" inside between anus and genitals	earth	lah	apāna	kūrma	annamaya (food)	bhūh	infertility, tissue diseases, disorders of genitals
SVĀDHIS-THĀNA	hypogastric plexus	1" - 1.5" above mūlādhāra (near hypogastrium)	water	vam	vyāna	dhanāñjaya	prānamaya (vital air)	bhuvah	urinary disorders, kidney diseases, calculi, etc.
MAṆIPŪRA	epigastric sciatic plexus	near navel	fire	rah	samāna	kṛkala	manomaya (mind)	svah	all disorders of digestive system, diabetes, piles, etc.
HRDAYACĀKRA OR MANASĀKRA	lower mind plexus	between the two breasts							
ANĀHATA	cardiac plexus	heart	air	yam	prāna	nāga	vijñāmaya (intellect)	mahah	heart diseases, high B.P., etc.
VISUDDHI	carotid plexus	throat	space	ham	udāna	devadatta	ānandamaya (bliss)	janah	asthma, lung disorders, etc.
ĀJNĀKAKRA	medullary plexus	between eyebrows (a little behind cerebellum)	manas (mind)	om				tapah	epilepsy, fainting, nervous system disorders, paralysis, etc.
SAHASRĀRA	cerebral gland	cerebellum (above fontanelle in the cerebrum)	mahattatva (pure potentiality)					satyam	hormonal imbalance, metabolic syndrome, etc.

diseases of bones and muscles

## SOME GUIDELINES FOR MEDITATION

While meditating, give meditation (dhyāna) the utmost importance. At the time of meditation, don't entertain any other thought howsoever noble or auspicious it may be. Giving charity, rendering service or good to others, studying, serving your guru and tending the cows, etc. are noble deeds, but while you are in meditation, don't think about them. At the time of meditation, the only aim of thought, contemplation, study or realization should be 'brahman'.

At the time of meditation, turn your mind and senses inward, and before meditation you must think in your mind on these lines: "I am not matter, wealth, affluence, land, house, son, grandson, spouse, etc. All these manifest- unmanifest entities are not my true nature. I am independent of the bond of animate and inanimate external objects. This body also is not my true self. I am independent of the body, the sense organs and the enjoyments of senses in the form of sound, touch, sight, taste and smell, etc. I am independent of the mind and its distractions like lust, anger, greed, delusion and the five afflictions with abhiniveśa (fear of death) being one of them. I am the blissful, luminous, pure being. I am the child of immortality. I am related to that ocean of bliss, the Very Essence of Being, Consciousness and Bliss, the Almighty God, as a drop to the ocean; it evaporates from the sea and ascends to the sky, rains down to the earth and flowing in a river loses its identity into the ocean again; a drop cannot live without the ocean. I, a mere drop, also want to be an ocean by dissolving myself into the supreme Lord, the Ocean of Bliss. That Creator, Providence, Our Father, Supreme Lord has given us everything—life, breath, birth, age, body, intellect, physical comforts, house, family, parents, etc. That Lord is always showering bliss on me. His peace and supreme happiness is raining on me from all sides. That Blissful Mother and Supremely Protective Father does not separate me from Himself even for a moment. I am always in the Lord and the Lord is in me. This identification, this similarity and integrality with him will bestow supreme bliss upon us. God is raining this

bliss always and incessantly. Even then if we don't experience that bliss, it is our own fault.

A sādḥaka (seeker) should always have an attitude of discernment (viveka) and non-attachment (vairāgya). He should do all noble deeds as a service to God in a non-attached manner by situating himself as a seer, spectator (=soul). The performance of one's duty without any ego or any expectation of its reward is practical meditation.

The thought of external happiness and the means of pleasure ultimately cause misery. As long as the mind seeks happiness in worldly things, it will be impossible to attain surrender to God, and the meditation and absorption (samādhi) leading to complete dedication to God (īśvarapraṇidhāna).

Therefore, every seeker of liberation (mumukṣu) should devote at least one hour daily to recitation, meditation and worship. By doing this he can end all his miseries in this birth and realize the supreme Lord, our Great Father. It should always be remembered that the main aim of life is self-realization and attainment of God; all other actions and aims are secondary. If we don't start marching right now in our life on the path of God-realization, the Upaniṣad seers observe:

**iha cedavedīdatha satyamasti  
na cedihāvedīnmaḥatī vinaṣṭiḥ /  
bhūteṣu bhūteṣu vicitya dhirāḥ  
pretyāsmālokādamṛtā bhavanti // (KENOPANIṢAD : 2.5)**

This mantra purports to say that a person who right now gets engrossed in righteous thinking and endeavours to know God, only he achieves success. On the other hand, if a person spends his life only in mundane activities, he is putting himself to great loss.

In this whole process there are also some very essential rules and precautions which must be observed by every sādḥaka.

### **Special Rules and Precautions**

Observance of celibacy is most indispensable. A householder (gṛhastha) can also attain this supreme bliss through this effortless procedure of spiritual discipline. For the attainment

of this absolute bliss he also will have to forsake momentary sensual pleasures, otherwise it will not be possible to rise to full elevation.

Also pay attention to the purity and simplicity of food. Proper food, proper sleep and a disciplined life are the *sine qua non* of meditation and worship.

Nobody can be a yogi without adhering to abstinences (yamas) and observances (niyamas). Therefore, in order to attain kuṇḍalinī-rising, complete cleansing and penetrating of cakras, and the state of samādhi, every seeker (sādhaka) must make all-out efforts to adhere to the five abstinences, viz. non-violence, speaking the truth, non-stealing, celibacy and non-greed, and the five observances, viz. purity and cleanliness, contentment, penance, study of scriptures and complete dedication to God. You should not feel overawed that because of your non-compliance with yamas (abstinences) and niyamas (observances), you will not be able to become a complete yogi; but that is not the case. Just keep doing the yogic procedures in accordance with the aforesaid method, and your life will be blessed with yoga. Your faith, belief and sincerity in yamas, niyamas like non-violence, truth, etc. will be so much strengthened that you will not feel like telling a lie, etc. You will never have any feeling of violence toward anybody. That is why yoga is said to be natural and spontaneous, yoga is our own religion.

Once the kuṇḍalinī is awakened, it should not be assumed that it will always keep on awakening without any effort or practice. To achieve this, one must constantly have a healthy mind and healthy body, cleanliness, purity of diet and thoughts as well as non-attachment, otherwise one can lose the practice of meditation.

While pursuing this path, seekers should eschew pretension and ostentation, and should cultivate the virtue of being calm, natural, devoid of pride and arrogance, and be of limited speech. One should not at all be hungry for applause, name, fame, etc.



## SYMPTOMS AND BENEFITS OF KUṆḌALINĪ AWAKENING

The spiritual benefit of kuṇḍalinī-awakening is beyond words. However, it can be said without any doubt that it is a state of complete bliss. Nothing remains to be attained after attaining this state. There is complete contentment, serenity and supreme happiness. Another person sitting near such a sādḥaka also experiences peace and serenity. By sitting near such a yogi all the agitations and distractions of the other person also start getting becalmed, and one develops faith and devotion toward yoga and God. Besides, one whose kuṇḍalinī is awakened develops the glow of grace and beauty in his body. A feeling of happiness and equanimity reflects from his face. Feelings of affection, compassion and divinity can be read in his eyes. His thinking becomes completely pure and sublime. In short, every aspect of his life touches the heights of sacredness, sublimity and greatness.

On one hand this whole process has its spiritual benefits, on the other, its great importance lies in the fact that a person practising these yogic procedures cannot suffer from any disease. Cancer, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, all stomach ailments, all imbalances and disorders of vāta, pitta and kapha are automatically eliminated. A person becomes completely healthy. Is it a small achievement for a selfish person of modern times that all his diseases can be eliminated without any medicine, and throughout his life he can remain hale and hearty, mentally sharp and work-efficient?

Normally a person is capable of utilizing only 5% of his physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual potential. With the awakening of kuṇḍalinī all his internal powers and inner intellect are awakened, and from an ordinary man he becomes a great man, an apostle, a prophet. Divine powers incarnate themselves in an accomplished yogi. God chooses such a yogi for the purpose of propagating peace and welfare in the world. Such a yogi lives as a representative of God, and millions of people repose their faith in him. He becomes the living embodiment of religiosity, spirituality, and God's existence.



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