

A Study of Yoga and Pranayam in Human Life

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Abstract – Yoga breathing which is known as pranayama yoga is the first step toward re-orienting and improving the functioning of your mind and body by learning to optimize the breathing process. The Yogis were the first to discover the importance of oxygen and breathe control and devised an exact science of breathing. They called it PRANA-YAMA, from the Sanskrit word prana meaning breath, and Yama, its control or cessation. Pranayama includes following correct breathing technique and breath control.

Key words: Yoga, Prana, Apana, Udana, Samana, Vyan

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INTRODUCTION

Pranayama is control of 'breathing'. Prana is 'breath' energy in the body. On subtle levels Prana represents the Pranic energy responsible for life force, and apana means control so Pranayama is 'control of breath'.

One can control the rhythms of pranic energy with pranayama and achieve healthy body and mind (Patanjali and Woods (transl.) 1914). Patanjali in his text of yoga sutras said 'pranayama as means of attaining higher states of awareness, he mentions the holding of breath as important practices of reaching samadhi' (Monier Monier Williams, 2019). Five types of prana are responsible for various pranic activities in the body, they are PRANA, APANA, VYAN, UDANA & SAMANA. Out of these PRANA and APANA are most important. Prana upward flowing and Apana is downward flowing (Yoga 2019). Practice of Pranayama achieves the balance in the activities of these pranas, which results in healthy body and mind.

STAGES OF YOGA BREATHING PROCESS:

- Inhalation which is called (puraka), fills the lungs with air and stimulates the whole body.
- Retention, is called (kumbhaka) during retention the body's temperature is raised and the oxygen is absorbed.
- Exhalation, is called (rechaka) here the diaphragm is returned to its original position and toxic air is released into the atmosphere (Phillips, Stephen H., 2013).

TYPES OF YOGA BREATHING (PRANAYAMA):

Following are the pranayama exercises you can practice

- Rhythmic breathing and deep breathing Harmonizes your body with your breath
- Alom Vilom Ideal Pranayama for Healthy Heart
- Kapalabhati Ideal for respiratory system, boosts memory
- Agnisar Takes care of your abdomen/digestive organs/intestines.
- Bhastrika Ideal for diseases of the nose, chest and cures Asthma
- Surya Bhedi Warms up the body in winters
- Chandra Bhedi Cools the body in summer
- Ujjayi Cures asthma, cough, cold and diseases of nose and ears
- Bhramri Pranayama Increases blood circulation, stimulates thyroid glands
- Shitali Pranayama Has a cooling effect, makes you beautiful
- Shitkari Pranayama Has a cooling effect, makes you beautiful

BENEFITS FROM PRANAYAMA:

Benefits of pranayama are both tangible and intangible. God has provided prana, the supreme source of power free of cost to all human beings. Proper utilization of this free source of energy can make remarkable changes to our health, vitality and self-confidence (David Carpenter; Ian Whicher 2003). Hence, we cannot simply equate prana with oxygen present in the air, the air we breathe is also filled with vital energy known as prana.

All benefits of pranayama cannot be written down, there are lot of subtle changes like mental peace and clarity of thought that occur in our mind.

REDUCED BREATHING RATE:

With yoga breathing you can train yourself to breathe more slowly and more deeply. You can reduce your breathing rate from about fifteen breaths a minute to 5-6 breaths a minute, which amounts to reducing the breathing rate by one third. Reduced breathing rate leads to: According to Feuerstein, Georg (2019) some tips about inhalation and exhalation

- Slowing down the heart rate as more oxygen can be pumped even with less number of breaths. Follow the ration of 1:2 for inhalation: exhalation.
- Reduced wear and tear of internal organs.
- Lowering of blood pressure, relaxation of body tensions and quieter nerves.

PRANAYAMA PRACTICE INCREASES LIFE:

As per yoga philosophy, longevity depends on your breathing rate. Lowering of breathing rate is likely to increase your life. For example, a tortoise takes four to five breaths in a minute and it lives up to 200 years or more.

BLOOD CIRCULATION IMPROVES:

As a result of breathing, the freshly oxygenated blood (during inhalation) travels from lungs to the heart. The heart pumps it via arteries and blood vessels to every part of the body, where in turn it seeps into every tissue and cell. This improves the blood circulation and more oxygen/ prana or cosmic energy reaches all parts of your body.

PRANAYAMA FOR HEALTHY HEART:

Our heart is the most industrious organ of our body. The heart beats 100,000 times a day. It is pumping blood day in and day out non-stop all your life. The health of your heart determines your life expectancy and quality of life in old age. More oxygen in the blood means more oxygen to muscles of the heart.

Benefits of Pranayama for Functioning of Body Organs:

- Better functioning of autonomic system improves the working of lungs, heart, diaphragm, abdomen, intestines, kidneys and pancreas.
- Digestive system improves and diseases pertaining to digestive organs are cured.
- General irritability due to lethargy/ fatigue vanishes.
- By pranayama practice all body organs gets more oxygen, toxins are removed from body, therefore onset of various diseases is prevented. Pranayama strengthens the immune system.

MENTAL HEALTH BETTER:

Pranayama practice provides freedom from negative and harmful mental conditions like anger, depression, lasciviousness, greed for money, arrogance etc., (Iyengar, 2009).

With pranayama fluctuations of mind are controlled and it prepares the mind for meditation. With practice of pranayama, you will start experiencing lightness of body, feeling of inner peace, better sleep, better memory and better concentration whereby improving the spiritual powers/ skills.

Better Breathing Improves Quality of Life in Old Age:

As a person with sedentary lifestyle reaches middle age, lung tissues tend to grow less and less elastic and lung capacity decreases. Pranayama can help to reduce the effects of following old age problems:

- Loss of vitality.
- Accumulation of uric acid in the blood stream which often leads to frequent joint pains and discomfort.
- Backaches, headaches, rheumatism, stiffening muscles and joints.
- Proper circulation of blood is impeded by a sluggish diaphragm or hardening arteries.

CONCLUSION:

It is recommended to start learning pranayama from a yoga teacher without any delay in order to experience the immense benefits of pranayama. Benefits of yoga breathing can be realised only by experience. Establish a daily routine of yoga breathing exercises. If you want to start on your

own, first start with rhythmic deep breathing to get into the rhythm.

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