

PRANAYAMA

*“PRANAMYA KARUNAAMOORTIM ATMANJNANA PRADEEPAKAM YOGAKSHEME
NIYUKTHOHAM DHYATWA JYOTHIRMUHAM GUROH”*

We are now entering into a new realm of experience, knowledge and wisdom physically and mentally, leading to spiritual heights.

The knowledge being imparted to you has to be very clearly understood and put into practice as your daily practice, so systematically that you achieve the desired results. You are, therefore, counseled to pay serious attention to the study and practice of the lessons as will be passed on to you from time to time.

Today’s lesson is on PRANAYAMA the process of bringing in PRANA energy into the physical apparatus for maintaining perfect health. Before we go right into the subject, there are certain basic facts to be understood and accepted by all. The vast space in the Universe is filled with or occupied by a great Power and it is the only entity that is present everywhere and one and the same time. This Power is also intelligent and all-powerful. It is generally known as the Omnipresent, Omniscient and Omnipotent Power – the Creative Spirit-GOD. This Power has no name or form. We have, therefore, to understand that this Universal Spirit –GOD is –
A) Present everywhere at one and the same time.
B) Knows everything – and so, it has a Universal Mind
C) Is all - powerful – having and using Universal Energy?
All that we see around us, in all the varieties of life are therefore, experience of this One Power – the Creator of this Universe. We can therefore, clearly understand that we are all “expressions of God” and can identify ourselves as “part of God” embodied in human form. The creative Spirit or God or Creator (whatever name we may use matters not) therefore occupies every living organism and this embodied part of the creator expresses outward from within everybody. The expression of this embodied part of God coming from within the body will be, of course, according to the nature and quality of the embodiment – the body. Human body is nothing but an electrical instrument, carefully devised by the Creator – with its countless cells, an intricate network of energy – carrying cables (nerves) and the varying sizes of pipe lines, spread out in all directions to carry the blood stream to all parts of body. It is also provided with matchless mechanisms for receiving and sending out sensations.

As we all know, any equipment or apparatus, if not put to use regularly, gets out of order and wears out in course of time. Similarly, the mechanisms within the human body function as they are put to use. If you happen to watch a newborn baby breathing, you can see the quick movement of the bottom, the lower and upper part of the lungs expanding and contracting perfectly, indicating that the full capacity of the lungs is being utilized. But, as the child grows into maturity a young man or a woman – if you watch the

process of breathing, you will notice that the breathing is not as full as that of the child. The adult person has less capacity in the lungs due to contraction of the walls of the lungs as a result of improper use of the lungs. You will be surprised to know that an average person uses only 10 percent of his/her total lungs' capacity, the walls of the lungs' having become hard and inflexible, thus preventing full breathing. As a result, he/she does not get enough air and oxygen to cope up with the bulk of blood to be purified for circulation in the body. He/she cannot walk fast, he/she feels difficulty in climbing flights of steps in a staircase; he/she cannot run for long distances – because the lungs refuse to expand beyond the reduced, hardened walls of the lungs.

The result of insufficient breathing can be bad and dangerous. The impurities in the blood stream cannot be destroyed constantly due to lack of sufficient oxygen. The oxygen input through breathing can increase only if we can increase the lungs' capacity. The blood vessels inside the body, at various places, develop layers of impurities embedded all round inside on the walls, forming layers which get hardened in course of time, thus making the passage inside the vessels narrower and narrower gradually. The blood stream has to pass through the narrow passage in its journey from the heart to its destination—the lungs, for purification. The lungs having reduced capacity the walls shrunk, thickened and hard with impurity layers cannot receive free and sufficient oxygen and so the impure blood passes on to the heart from the lungs for continuous pumping.

We all know that the circulation of blood within the body is carried on by the continuous effort of the heart in pumping the blood through the blood vessels. You can therefore understand that the burden of pumping the impure blood that comes from the lungs through the narrow space in the blood vessels coated with layers of impurities as mentioned above and the strain the heart undergoes in the process.

The condition of such blood vessels is like a sewer full of filthy water, flowing slowly. The impurities result from damaged or worn out cells floating in the blood, gathered during the course of the journey of the blood stream from the part of the body. This can be compared to the water that we receive through the water pipe laid in our houses. If any one can cut a piece of water pipe from an old build, he will be able to understand the condition of the blood vessel. He will notice that the inside part (hollow) of the pipe is coated with impurity layers which have become thick, making the actual capacity much less as compared to a fresh pipe.

How to overhaul the system of blood circulation in the body? How to prevent the various types of diseases developing from the circulation of impure blood in the body? How to prolong and preserve health of the body? How to avoid heart disease? These are the main questions that arise in the mind of the majority of sick people.

By taking medicine, many people believe that diseases can be cured invariably. People do get relief through medicines but not the cure. What we have to do is to remove the cause of disease from within the body and it is here that the practice of PRANAYAMA helps. As we breathe normally, we receive three things – AIR charged with OXYGEN and PRANA energy (Electricity) through the nose. Of these three, Air and Oxygen go to the

lungs while Prana is drawn by the Positive and Negative Cables (located at the root of right and left nostrils respectively), for distribution to the various parts of the body. As we do not receive sufficient air, oxygen and Prana (because of reduced lungs' capacity), the blood does not get fully purified. Pranayama breathing exercise brings in more air, more oxygen and more Prana energy into our body thus purifying more quantity of blood and supplying more energy to the body. Gradually, the lungs' capacity to receive more air and oxygen increases with regular practice of Pranayama breathing exercise.

As we inhale, the oxygen in the air is spreading within our lungs and is appropriated by the blood and is made use of in the circulatory system by which the blood gets purified, similarly, Prana which also gets in along with the breath through the nostrils is appropriated by the nervous system and is used in its work. As the oxygenated blood is carried to all parts of the circulatory system in its work of replenishment and building up, so Prana is carried to all parts of the nervous system adding up strength and vitality as a continuous process.

Prana Energy which is plenty in space, entered through the Right and Left nostrils and is drawn in by the Positive Cable on the Right Side (known as Pingala Naadi), and the Negative cable on the Left side (known as Ida Naadi). As you now know, Prana is Cosmic Energy and it is this energy that generates overall warmth in the body. The Positive cable (Pingala Naadi) and the Negative cable (Ida Naadi) receive the positive and negative Prana through the Right and Left nostrils respectively and transmit the energy down to the bottom of the spinal column. These cables starting at the root of the nostrils are extending to the medulla and from there down to the bottom of the spinal column along the right and left sides of the spine respectively. They are joined or brought together at the bottom of the spinal column – the main switch in our body. So, the main switch in the human body is located at the bottom of the spinal column, for distribution of Prana

Energy to the entire body. The purpose of locating the Main Switch at the root of the spinal column, is to distribute high voltage current of Prana to the departments of regeneration, expulsion of waste – the excretory and urinary systems and also to the digestive system, all of which require plenty of Prana energy for their work. Then, the energy goes up to the next higher plexus along the Spinal column and likewise to the subsequent ascending plexuses located on the Spinal column. As the energy moves along to these plexuses, the voltage is altered to the requirement of the various parts of the body, through the wonderful network of nerves starting from each plexus, for distribution of energy throughout the body, to keep uniform warmth everywhere.

Now, let us study the circulatory system of the blood. We receive through the nostrils, air and oxygen as we inhale. While air is only a medium, oxygen is chemical fire, which burns up the impurities in the blood that comes to the lungs; the residue after purification of blood – i.e. carbon, is thrown out of the lungs as we exhale and this is known as carbon dioxide.

Blood vessels – large and small – are countless in number and are laid out in the body, like water pipes. The blood vessels are made of delicate but strong tissue layers and therefore are flexible. However, they retain their flexibility and tenderness only as long as

they are in warm area: warmth is necessary for retaining their flexible condition. Absence of sufficient warmth makes them inflexible and shrunk and hardened, and it becomes impossible for blood to flow through such shrunk and inflexible blood vessels. The warmth is uniformly distributed in the body by the energy cables nerves carrying Prana energy, as explained earlier. Therefore, proper distribution of Prana is absolutely necessary for harmonious flow of blood in the body through the blood vessels.

PRANAYAMA BREATHING EXERCISE - LESSON 1

Practice of Pranayama breathing exercise should be carried where fresh air is freely available. If practicing at home, it should be practiced before an open window. A suitable place has to be selected (which should not be changed often) for the practice. The posture for practice of Pranayama is very simple. You may sit on the floor in a squatting position comfortably, keeping the SPINE STRAIGHT. Or you may use a chair or stool of a comfortable height – keep heels together and toes apart. Or you may stand keeping the heels together and toes apart. First of all, you must have a correct assessment of your own capacity of the lungs to hold breath. Pranayama breathing exercise has three parts viz. **(a) INHALATION (b) RETENTION OF BREATH and (c) EXHALATION.** With a view to get maximum supply of oxygen, the inhalation and exhalation have to be channelised through the throat (comfortably widen the throat – keeping the mouth closed, but you inhale thru nostrils) by this method more Oxygen gets into the lungs, and more of accumulated Carbon dioxide comes out of the lungs. There should be no strain, and during the process, you will distinctly hear the even, smooth sound of breathing. This method helps particularly those who suffer from Asthma or congestion at the throat. Please make it a habit to breathe through your throat to solve all breathing problems and a few days efforts will make the practice more enjoyable (a life long friend).

As you practice, take a long breath and try to hold it within the lungs, as long as you can comfortably hold it. You may exhale slowly when you start feeling discomfort in holding the breath. Do this a number of times so as to know for yourself your own capacity to hold the breath. It may be for about 5 or 6 seconds, or more, or less. You have to get a clear idea of your own capacity to hold the breath. The accepted average for practice generally is about 16 seconds. Now, if you are able to hold the breath for 16 seconds, that becomes your basic capacity for retention of breath in the lungs. The inhalation and exhalation in Pranayama is determined by this retention capacity of breath. So, with this principle, the inhalation should be completed within $\frac{1}{4}$ time of retention viz. 4 seconds, and the exhalation within $\frac{1}{2}$ time of retention, viz. 8 seconds. The proportion of your inhalation, retention and exhalation will therefore, be 1:4:2.

So, during the practice, first take a deep inhalation, filling the lungs with air and oxygen within 4 seconds; retain the breath without any discomfort for sixteen seconds, and exhale slowly, thoroughly emptying the lungs within eight seconds.

As the Prana energy has to be drawn in separately in its Positive and Negative aspects, we have to close one nostril while inhaling through the other. Now, the real practice of Pranayama: ::

- (a) Close the RIGHT nostril and inhale (keeping your throat as axis) steadily through the LEFT nostrils in 4 seconds to fill the lungs with air and oxygen; retain the breath for 16 seconds, without any strain. Negative Prana is drawn by the Ida Naadi and is taken to the bottom of the spinal column.
- (b) At the end of 16 seconds of retention of breath, close the LEFT nostril and release the RIGHT nostril and exhale fully within 8 seconds.
- (c) Keeping the RIGHT nostril still open (and keeping the Left nostril still closed) inhale fully within 4 seconds and retain the breath in the lungs for 16 seconds; then, close the Right nostril and exhale through the Left nostril by releasing the left nostril, within 8 seconds.

This process of inhalation through Left nostril, retention of breath, exhalation through Right nostril, and again inhalation through Right nostril, retention of breath and exhalation through Left nostril, constitutes one Pranayama.

Practice Pranayama four times – i.e 2 in the morning, 2 before taking solid food, and 2 in the evening and 2 at night before dinner. You may gradually increase the number of times of practice of PRANAYAMA according to your need. Regular practice will work wonders and you will enjoy abundant health. Until next mail, please practice this regularly and enjoy good health.