

## 1.0. MEANING OF PRANAYAMA

Pranayama means control and regulation of breath.

“Prana;” is a Sanskrit word which means ‘vital force’. It also signifies ‘life’ or breath. ‘Ayana, means the control of the Prana so Pranayama means the control of the vital force (Prana) by concentration and regulated breathing.

Prana is the vital power or force which is motivating every element on the earth and is the origin of the force of thought. There is a deep affinity between Prana and mental force, between mental force and intellect, between intellect and soul, and between soul and God. The Prana not only ensures the proper functioning of the body (including the glandular system), but is also the regulator and animator of the psyche. It is a remedy for several physical and psychic disturbances of which modern man is the victim.

In all forms of life, from the highest to the lowest, the prana is present as a living force. All the force is based on prana; it is the origin of movement, gravity, magnetism, physical action, the nerve currents and the force of the thought. Without prana there can be no life, for it is the soul of all force and energy. It is found in the air, water and food. Prana is the vital force inside each living being, and thought is the highest and most refined action of Prana. As we breathe, the movement of the lungs inhaling air is the expression of prana. Pranayama is not simply the breathing but the control of the muscular force activating the lungs.

The control of Prana through the concentration of thought and regular breathing is called ‘Pranayama’. It is through Pranayama that each part of the body can be filled with Prana. Once one is capable of performing it, one is master of the body and can dominate illness and suffering. Prana is accumulated where our mind is concentrated.

Thought is the absolute master controlling Prana-energy. Just as we are able to make ourselves ill and weak by thinking wrong and negative thoughts, so we may cure ourselves by expelling bad thoughts and replacing them with positive ones. It is the essential factor in our lives. It is a basic necessity for the safeguard of our health. As a wind drives smoke and impurities from the atmosphere, Pranayama drives away the impurities of the body and mind.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES OF PRANAYAMA

The objective of Pranayama is to inspire, motivate, regulate and balance the vital force (Prana) pervailing in the body. It cleanses the body and knowledge is manifested. Pranayama is called the soul of yoga. Bathing is necessary for Purifying the body similarly, Pranayama is essential for Purifying the mind. Just as gold and other metal melted in the fire become pure so also the sense-organs of body get rid of impurities by pranayama. The objective of pranayama is to strengthen the nervous system. It also increases the concentration power of the mind.

The important components of pranayama are :

- Puraka means to inhale
- Rechaka means to exhale
- Kumbhaka means to retain the breath.

### 3.0 TYPES OF PRANAYAMA

Surya Bhedana Pranayama

Ujjayi Pranayama

Sheetkari Pranayama

Sheetali Pranayama

Bhastrika Pranayama

Bharmari Pranayama

Moorcha Pranayama

Kapalabhaati Pranayama

Sama Vrtti Pranayama

Nadi Sodhana Pranayama

Plavini Pranayama.

**Surya Bhedana Pranayama :** Surya is the sun. Bhedana is derived from the root, bhid meaning to pierce, to break or pass through. The surya bhedana exercise stimulates that part of the brain which contains the life force (vital force). The practice of this Pranayama produces heat in the body.

In Surya Bhedana Pranayama, the breath is inhaled through the right/left nostril. In this the prana passes through the pingala of surya nadi. A kumbhaka is performed and the breath is exhaled through the left/right nostril which is the path of the Ida nadi.

**Ujjayi Pranayama :** This means upward or superiority in rank. It also means blowing or expanding. It conveys the sense of pre-eminence and power. This Pranayama produces heat in the body. Jaya means conquest, victory, triumph or success. It is the process in which the lungs are fully expanded and the chest puffed out like that of a proud conqueror.

**Sheetakari Pranayama :** The practice of Sheetakari has a cooling effect on the body. The tongue is not curled. The lips are kept slightly parted and only the tip of the tongue protrudes between the teeth. The tongue is kept flat as in its normal state.

**Sheetali Pranayama :** Sheetali means cool. This Pranayama cools the system i.e. body and mind. In this protrude the tongue out and curl it like a pipe. Breath with a sibilant sound Si-si-si fill the lungs completely. Hold the breath for as much time as possible. Then slowly exhale through both the nostrils.

**Bhastrika Pranayama :** Bhastrika means a bellows used in a furnace. The air is forcibly drawn in and out as in a black smith's bellow. In this Pranayama take a vigorous breath and exhale fast and forcefully. One inhalation and one exhalation completes a cycle of bhastrika. The sound made resembles air rushing through bellows.

**Bharmari Pranayama :** (humming bee breath) Sit in a padmasana or sidhasana. Close the eyes and relax the whole body for a short time. The lips should remain gently closed with teeth slightly separated throughout the practice. The sound vibration is heard and felt more distinctly in the brain. Raise the arms and bend the elbows, bringing the hands to the ears. Plug the ears with middle or index finger. Breathe in through the nose. Exhale slowly and in a controlled manner while making a deep steady humming sound like that of the black bee. The humming sound should be smooth, even and continuous for the duration of exhalation. The sound should be soft. Breathe deeply at the end of exhalation. This is one round, repeat the process.

*in moorchha pranayama take a breath from the nose with mouth closed and released from open mouth*

**Moorchha Pranayama :** (Swooning or fainting breath) sit in a padmasana or sidhasana. Keep the head and spine straight. Relax the whole body. Observe the breath untill it becomes slow and deep. Keep the arms straight by locking the elbow and pressing the knees with the hands. Retain the breath inside for as long as is comfortable. Exhale while relaxing the arms. Close the eyes and slowly bring the head back to the upright position. Relax the whole body. This is one round, repeat the process. Moorcha means to faint. Through this the experiences of conscious unconsciousness is meant to arise. This is to expand the consciousness and store prana.

**Kapalabhati Pranayama :** Kapalabhati (Kapala is skull ; bhati is light, luster) is a milder form of Bhastrike Pranayama. In Kapalabhati, the inhalation is slow but the exhalation is vigorous, there is a split second of retention after each exhalation.

**Sama Vrtti Pranayama :** Sama means the same or identical, straight, entire, whole and complete, also similarly or in the same manner.

*समान वृत्ति वाला*

Vrtti means action, movement, function or operation, a course of conduct or method. In this Pranayama an attempt is made to achieve uniformity in the duration of all the three processes of breathing, namely puraka or inhalation, Kumbhaka or retention, and Rechaka or exhalation in any type of Pranayama.

*इस प्रणाम में Inhale, कृष्क, exhale समान*  
*सम वृत्ति*

**Nadi Sodhana Pranayama :** Nadi is a tubular organ of the body like an artery or a vein for the passage of prana or energy. A nadi has three layers like an insulated electric wire. The inner most layer is called sirsa, the middle layer damani and the entire organ as well as the out layer is called nadi.

*Alternate nostril breathing is nadi sodhan pranayama*

Sodhana means purifying or cleansing, so the object of Nadi Sodhana Pranayama is the purification of the nerves. A little obstruction in a water pipe can cut off the supply completely. A little obstruction in the nerves can cause great discomfort and paralyse a limb or organ.

**Plavini Pranayama (Gulping breath) :** In this the inner part of the abdomen being completely filled with air, and one float like a lotus leaf on water. Plavina means to 'float'. It is an unusual form of pranayama and is similar to vatsra dhauti, except the air is retained in the stomach and intestines and not expelled immediately.

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