

dualities of pleasure and pain, contraction and extension, heat and cold, honour and dishonour, etc.

Perfection in *āsana* brings unalloyed happiness, blessedness and beatitude.

ततो द्वन्द्वानभिघातः ॥४८॥

II.48 tataḥ dvandvāḥ anabhighātaḥ

<i>tataḥ</i>	from that, then
<i>dvandvāḥ</i>	dualities, opposites
<i>anabhighātaḥ</i>	cessation of disturbance

From then on, the sādḥaka is undisturbed by dualities.

The effect of *āsana* is to put an end to the dualities or differentiation between the body and mind, mind and soul. None of the pairs of opposites can exist for the *sādḥaka* who is one with body, mind and soul.

When body, mind and soul unite in a perfect posture, the *sādḥaka* is in a state of beatitude. In that exalted position, the mind, which is at the root of dualistic perception, loses its identity and ceases to disturb him. Unity is achieved between body and mind and mind and soul. There is no longer joy or sorrow, heat or cold, honour or dishonour, pain or pleasure. This is perfection in action and freedom in consciousness.

तस्मिन्सति श्वासप्रश्वासयोगतिविच्छेदः प्राणायामः ॥४९॥

II.49 tasmin satiśvāsa praśvāsayoḥ gativicchedaḥ
prāṇāyāmaḥ

<i>tasmin</i>	on this
<i>sati</i>	being accomplished
<i>śvāsa</i>	inbreath, inhalation
<i>praśvāsayoḥ</i>	outbreath, exhalation

<i>gati</i>	movement, motion, path, course, way
<i>vicchedaḥ</i>	cessation, stoppage, interruption
<i>prāṇāyāmaḥ</i>	(<i>prāṇa</i> = breath, vital force; <i>āyāmaḥ</i> = ascension, extension and expansion or length, breadth and circumference) regulation of breath, expansion of the life force or vital energy by regulation of breath

Prāṇāyāma is the regulation of the incoming and outgoing flow of breath with retention. It is to be practised only after perfection in āsana is attained.

Sūtras II.49–53 describe *prāṇāyāma* and its effects.

Prāṇāyāma, the fourth constituent of yoga, is what the heart is to the human body.

It is interesting to note that Patañjali expressly advises the *sādhaka* to do *prāṇāyāma* only after attaining perfection in *āsana*. For the first time, he shows a distinct step in the ascent of the ladder of yoga, whereas he has not stipulated progression for the other aspects.

Normally the flow of breath is unrestrained and irregular. Observing these variations, and conditioning the mind to control the inflow, outflow and retention of the breath in a regular, rhythmic pattern, is *prāṇāyāma*.

Prāṇa is an auto-energizing force which creates a magnetic field in the form of the Universe and plays with it, both to maintain, and to destroy for further creation. It permeates each individual as well as the Universe at all levels. It acts as physical energy; as mental energy, where the mind gathers information; and as intellectual energy with a discriminative faculty, where information is examined and filtered. This same *prāṇa* acts as sexual energy, spiritual energy and cosmic energy. All that vibrates in the Universe is *prāṇa*: heat, light, gravity, magnetism, vigour, power, vitality, electricity, life and spirit are all forms of *prāṇa*. It is the cosmic personality, potent in all beings and non-beings. It is the prime mover of all activity. It is the wealth of life.

This self-energizing force is the principle of life and of consciousness. It is the creation of all beings in the Universe. All beings are born through it and live by it. When they die, their individual breath dissolves into the cosmic breath. *Prāṇa* is not only the hub of the wheel of life, but also of yoga. Everything is established in it. It permeates life, creating the sun, the moon, the clouds, the wind, the rain, the earth and all forms of matter. It is both being (*sat*) and non-being (*asat*). Each and every thing, or being, including man, takes shelter under it. *Prāṇa* is the fundamental energy and the source of all knowledge.

Prāṇa (energy) and *citta* (consciousness) are in constant contact with each

other. They are like twins. *Prāṇa* becomes focussed where *citta* is, and *citta* where *prāṇa* is. In yogic texts, it is said that as long as the breath is still, *prāṇa* is still, and hence *citta* is still. All types of vibrations and fluctuations come to a standstill when *prāṇa* and *citta* are steady and silent.

The wise yogis studied this connection between breath and consciousness and advocated the practice of *prāṇāyāma* to stabilize energy and consciousness.

The word *prāṇāyāma* consists of two components, *prāṇa* and *āyāma*. *Prāṇa* is energy, when the self-energizing force embraces the body. *Āyāma* means stretch, extension, expansion, length, breadth, regulation, prolongation, restraint and control. When this self-energizing force embraces the body with extension, expansion and control, it is *prāṇāyāma*.

In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the story is told of how 'the nectar of immortality' was produced through the churning of the ocean. This story, as will be understood from the interwoven explanation, symbolizes what takes place in the human body in the practice of *prāṇāyāma*.

The strength of the *asuras* (demons) alarmed the *devas* (angels), who, fearing that vice would dominate virtue, approached Lord Śiva, Lord Brahma and Lord Indra, who in turn approached Lord Viṣṇu, the protector of the Universe, for help.

Lord Viṣṇu suggested the churning of the ocean to bring out the nectar (*amṛta*) of immortality hidden in it. He advised the *devas* to discuss with the demons the effects of the nectar, and to persuade them to jointly churn the ocean. Lord Viṣṇu said that he would do the rest.

The angels and demons decided to use Mount Meru as the churn-staff for the churning, and Lord Ādiśeṣa, the serpent, the couch of Lord Viṣṇu, as the rope for whirling the mountain.

Plants, creepers, various grasses and herbs were gathered together and thrown into the ocean as raw materials so that they might be churned to produce the nectar of life.

According to *āyurveda*, the body is made up of seven constituents (*dhātus*) and three permeating humours (*doṣas*). The seven elements are so-called because they sustain the body. They are chyle (*rasa*), blood (*rakta*), flesh (*māṁsa*), fat (*meda*), bones (*asthi*), marrow (*majjā*), semen (*śukra*). They keep the body immune from infection and diseases. They are churned together in *prāṇāyāma* for the production of the nectar of life.

Mount Meru represents the spinal column, it acts as a whisk to churn the breath to produce energy. Lord Ādiśeṣa represents *suṣumna*: it is the rope which dashes or controls the spine in respiration. The head and tail of Ādiśeṣa represent the *piṅgalā* and *idā nāḍīs* (energy channels) or the upward and downward course of the in- and outbreath.

Idā also corresponds to the parasympathetic nervous system in western

medical terminology, *piṅgalā* with the sympathetic nervous system and *suṣumna* with the central nervous system. As Ādiṣeṣa was used as a rope for churning, so inhalation and exhalation are the two ends of the central nervous system, the rod that churns to create the energy that is then stored in the seven chambers (*cakras*) of the spine. Together they churn the inbreath and outbreath to generate the vital energy known as *prāṇa*.

To return to our story: as the churning began, Mount Meru sank deep into the ocean. Lord Viṣṇu incarnated as *Kūrma* (tortoise), crept underneath the mountain and lifted it from the floor of the seabed so that it might float and the churning could continue. Several gems were generated as a result of the churning. The last to spring out of the ocean was the *amṛta*, the nectar of immortality.

Puruṣa or the soul represents Lord Viṣṇu and the body represents *prakṛti*, or nature. The body becomes the fountain for production and the Lord of the body is its generative force. *Ātman* acts as a tortoise to lift and keep the diaphragm floating upwards, allowing the breath to come in contact with the inner elements of the body (earth, water, fire, air and ether) and its seven constituents (chyle, blood, flesh, fat, bones, marrow, semen), as well as the ten types of vital energy: *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *samāna*, *udāna*, *vyāna*, *nāga*, *kūrma*, *kṛkara*, *devadatta* and *dhananjaya*.

Through the contact of these seven constituents and ten vital energies, and with the help of the seer, the spine and the breath, the elixir of life-force is produced in the body. This *prāṇa* is now known as bio-energy. As *prāṇa* is a self-energizing force, it generates more power through the process of *prāṇāyāma*.

The first thing to spring from the ocean was the poison called *halāhala*. This was swallowed by Lord Śiva, who alone was capable of absorbing it. This *halāhala* represents the toxic output of exhalation.

The life elixir is produced by the five primary elements, which are its raw material. Earth is the base for production and ether acts as a distributor of energy. Air is active in the processes of breathing in and out. This stirs and creates a fusion of the elements of water and fire, which by nature are opposed to one another, resulting in the production of electrical energy known as life-force. In Sanskrit, this is called *ojas*, spiritual lustre.

The generation and distribution of *prāṇa* in the human system may be compared to the production and functioning of electrical energy. Stored water is stale; running water has a dynamic life-giving force. Water running with minimal force cannot generate electricity. Through the construction of a reservoir, water falls on turbines which whirl with speed and force for the production of energy. The energy of falling water or rising steam is made to rotate turbines within a magnetic field to generate electricity. The power is stepped up or down by transformers which regulate the voltage or current.

It is then transmitted along cables to light cities and run machinery. *Prāṇa* is like the falling water or the rising steam.

The thoracic area is the magnetic field. The practice of *prāṇāyāma* makes the spindles act as turbines and transmits the drawn-in energy to the remotest cells of the lungs for generating energy. The energy is accumulated in the *cakras* which are situated in the spinal column and act as transformers. This energy generated in the thoracic cavity is like electricity. It is stepped up or down by the *cakras* and is distributed throughout the body through the transmission lines of the circulatory and nervous systems.

The yogis discovered *prāṇāyāma* for making full use of this drawn-in energy so that it might maintain the entire human system, comprising the respiratory, circulatory, nervous, digestive, excretory and reproductive systems with optimum efficiency and harmony.

In *prāṇāyāma*, the carpet of the mucous membrane of the nostrils filters and cleanses the breath as it enters in inhalation. Upon exhalation, sufficient time is given for the system to absorb the drawn-in energy so that the breath may mingle with the blood. This purified blood, filled with chemical properties and hormones, is called 'a constituent full of jewels' or 'the jewel of blood' (*ratna pūrīta dhātu*).

Full use of this absorption and re-absorption of energy will allow one to live a hundred years with perfect health of body, clarity of mind, and equipoise of spirit. That is why the practice of *prāṇāyāma* is considered to be a great science and art.

(See notes on III.40 and also *Light on Yoga*, *Light on Prāṇāyāma* and *Tree of Yoga*.)

बाह्याभ्यन्तरस्तम्भवृत्तिर्देशकालसंख्याभिः परिहृष्टो दीर्घसूक्ष्मः ॥५०॥

II.50 bahya ābhyantara stambha vṛttiḥ deśa kāla
saṁkhyābhiḥ paridr̥ṣṭaḥ dīrgha sūkṣmaḥ

<i>bāhya</i>	external
<i>ābhyantara</i>	internal
<i>stambha</i>	restraint, suspension, a pause
<i>vṛttiḥ</i>	movement
<i>deśa</i>	place
<i>kāla</i>	time, duration
<i>saṁkhyābhiḥ</i>	number, precision, minuteness, reflection, deliberation

<i>paridṛṣṭaḥ</i>	regulated, measured
<i>dīrgha</i>	long in place and time, expansion, high
<i>sūkṣmaḥ</i>	subtle, soft, minute, fine, exquisite

Prāṇāyāma has three movements: prolonged and fine inhalation, exhalation and retention; all regulated with precision according to duration and place.

The first three components of *prāṇāyāma* are regulated inhalation, exhalation and retention; all are to be performed, prolonged and refined according to the capacity of the aspirant. The components are to be observed with regard to place (*deśa*), here meaning the torso, *kāla* indicating length of breath and *saṁkhyā*, indicating precision.

There are two types of retention in *prāṇāyāma*. They are the interruption of the breath flow following either the in- or outbreath. The movements of the breath and the pauses between them are regulated and prolonged according to the capacity of the lungs (*deśa*), the duration and measured regulation of the breath (*kāla*) and the degree of refinement and subtlety (*saṁkhyā*) of the *sādhaka*. Mastery is attained by practising in harmony, with rhythmic regulation (*paridṛṣṭa*).

Focus on the regulation of breath (*prāṇa vṛtti*), exhalation (*bāhya vṛtti*), inhalation (*antara vṛtti*) and retention (*stambha vṛtti*) is called *sabīja* (seed) *prāṇāyāma* as attention is on the breath itself.

Inhalation moves from the core of being – the seer – towards the consciousness. As *mahat* or cosmic intelligence is the first principle for nature's activity, its individual counterpart, *citta*, acts to stir the soul to activity. The inbreath is made to touch the five sheaths of the body: *ānandamaya*, *vijñānamaya*, *manomaya*, *prāṇamaya* and *annamaya*, or the elements: *ākāśa*, *vāyu*, *tej*, *āp* and *prthvi*; while the outbreath touches in the reverse order.

Bracing of the inbreath is the evolution of the soul or the ascending order of the *puruṣa*. When the self comes in contact with the physical body, inhalation is complete. Here, the *puruṣa* embraces *prakṛti*. The outbreath moves from the external body towards the seer, layer after layer. It is involution, or the descending order of *prakṛti* to meet its Lord, *puruṣa*. If the inbreath is the divine union of *puruṣa* with *prakṛti*, the outbreath is the union of *prakṛti* with *puruṣa*. Retention of the former is *antara kumbhaka*, retention of the latter is *bāhya kumbhaka*. If *antara kumbhaka* establishes consecration of the seer (*svarūpa pratiṣṭha*), *bāhya kumbhaka* frees one from the four aims of life (*puruṣārtha śūnya*). (See IV.34).

बाह्याभ्यन्तरविषयाक्षेपी चतुर्थः ।५१।

II.51 bāhya ābhyantara viṣaya ākṣepī caturthaḥ

bāhya	external
ābhyantara	internal
viṣaya	region, sphere, an object, reference, aim, realm
ākṣepī	passing over, gaining over, overcoming, transcending
caturthaḥ	the fourth

The fourth type of prāṇāyāma transcends the external and internal prāṇāyāmas, and appears effortless and non-deliberate.

The fourth type of *prāṇāyāma* goes beyond the regulation or modulation of breath flow and retention, transcending the methodology given in the previous sūtra. It is a state similar to *kevala kumbhaka*, which is mentioned in the *haṭhayoga* texts and in the *yoga upaniṣads*.

When the movement of the breath functions without one's volition or effort, the fourth stage of *prāṇāyāma* has been reached. The movements of the mind and consciousness cease. The flows of vital energy, intelligence and consciousness come to a standstill except for subliminal impressions. This is like *virāma pratyaya*, as explained in I.18. A state of pause is experienced, in both the breath and the mind. From this springs forth a new awakening and the light of intelligence vigorously penetrates the *sādhaka's* innermost being.

Since this fourth stage contains no restrictions, it transcends the range of movements described in the *prāṇāyāmas* of II.50. It is therefore a 'seedless' (*nirbīja*) *prāṇāyāma*.

ततः क्षीयते प्रकाशावरणम् ।५२।

II.52 tataḥ kṣīyate prakāśa āvaraṇam

tataḥ	from that, then
kṣīyate	destroyed, dissolved
prakāśa	light
āvaraṇam	covering

Prāṇāyāma removes the veil covering the light of knowledge and heralds the dawn of wisdom.

Its practice destroys illusion, consisting of ignorance, desire and delusion which obscure the intelligence; and allows the inner light of wisdom to shine. As the breeze disperses the clouds that cover the sun, *prāṇāyāma* wafts away the clouds that hide the light of the intelligence.

In the *Yoga Chudāmaṇi Upaniṣad*, it is said that there is no discipline higher than *prāṇāyāma*. It is called an exalted knowledge (*mahāvidyā*), a royal road to well-being, freedom and bliss.

धारणासु च योग्यता मनसः ॥५३॥

II.53 dhāraṇāsu ca योग्यता manasaḥ

<i>dhāraṇāsu</i>	for concentration
<i>ca</i>	and
<i>yogyatā</i>	fitness, suitability, propriety, ability, capability, appropriateness
<i>manasaḥ</i>	of the mind

The mind also becomes fit for concentration.

Prāṇāyāma is not only an instrument to steady the mind, but also the gateway to concentration, *dhāraṇā*.

Once the new light of knowledge has dawned through the practice of *prāṇāyāma*, the mind is fit and competent to move on towards the realization of the soul.

The implication here is clear that the *sādhaka* who had to struggle initially to cultivate a yogic way of life by self-discipline and study, now finds his efforts transformed into a natural zeal to proceed in his *sādhana*.