

# PRANAYAMA – A DAILY SCHEME

## NADIS OR ASTRAL CHANNELS

*Nadi* means flow or current. *Nadis* are sometimes equated to the nerves. Actually it is not so as *nadis* are composed of astral material. *Nadis* are subtle channels or ducts for the flow of vital *pranic* energy or bio-energy in the body in the same way as the endocrinal glands produce hormones and send them into the blood stream without any ducts or channels. Such glands are the pineal, the pituitary, the thyroid, para-thyroid, thymus, adrenal, pancreas, ovaries and testes. According to *yogis* there are more than 725 million such *nadis* in the *pranic* (energy) body of humans.

Of the many such *nadis* in the psychic body 14 are more important, and of these 3 are chiefly important—The *IDA NADI*, the *PINGALA NADI*, and the *SUSHUMNA NADI*.

- The *Ida* emanates from the left of *Mooladhara chakra* at the bottom of the spinal cord and going through the *svadhisthana*, *manipura*, *anahata* and *vishuddhi chakras* it ends at the *ajna chakra* in the middle of the eyebrows.
- The *Pingala* traverses the same path but on the right side of the body.
- The *Sushumna* is situated just in the center of the spinal cord.
- *Ida* and *Pingala* are pathways of the two polar opposites of life energy flowing within the human body.
- *Ida*, also called the *Chandra Nadi*, corresponds to negative energy and *Pingala*, also called the *Surya Nadi*, corresponds to positive energy in the human body.
- *Ida* is associated with the left nostril and *Pingala* with the right nostril.
- *Sushumna Nadi* acts as a thermostat to balance the opposite characteristics of the other two.
- When the two *nadis* are purified and balanced the mind becomes cool and tranquil. This happens when the energy flows through the *Sushumna nadi* only.
- In human physiology the two *nadis* roughly correspond to the two halves of the autonomic nervous system—the sympathetic and the Para-sympathetic.
- *Pingala* coincides with the sympathetic and *Ida* with the Para-sympathetic.
- The **sympathetic** nervous system speeds up the activity of the heart, dilates the blood vessels, increases the respiratory rate and enhances the efficiency of the eyes, ears etc.
- The **para-sympathetic** nerves on the other hand are opposed to sympathetic nerves for they reduce the heartbeat, constrict the blood vessels and reduce the rate of respiration, and cool the body.

## FOUR NADI SHODHANA PRANAYAMAS

(PRANAYAMAS FOR CLEANSING AND PURIFYING THE ENERGY DUCTS)

Purification of the *Nadis* is of utmost importance to ensure adequate flow of vital *pranic* energy. Any blockage of these channels may result in blocking of energy and consequent cause of serious physical or mental entropy and diseases.

Let us take up four such most important *pranayamas* of purging the *Nadi*-system, in the sequence below.

### 1. CHANDRA NADI PRANAYAMA (LEFT NOSTRIL)

This *pranayama* is to be done for 2 minutes (or 11 times) only.

- Sit yourself in any comfortable meditative posture— *padmasana*, *siddhasana* or otherwise *sukhasana* and close your eyes.
- The head and neck should be maintained vertical.
- Put your left hand in *Jyana* or *Chin mudra* on your left knee.
- Fold the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> fingers of your right hand into your palm and use only the thumb and the ring finger. This is *nasika mudra*.
- Keep the arm comfortably in front of your body, supported on to your chest.
- Put your thumb on your right nostril and ring finger on your left nostril.
- Close your right nostril with your thumb and start deep and rhythmical breathing only through your left nostril.
- Exhale through left and inhale through left.
- Do not change the nostril during the *pranayama*.
- Do not retain the breath, simply continue exhalations and inhalations.
- Deep and rhythmical breathing only through left nostril.
- Your eyes should remain closed.
- Concentrate on the breathing process.
- The time of exhalation and inhalation should be equal, so recite mentally OM to count this, the same number of OM you exhale, the same number you inhale.
- Deep and rhythmical breathing only through left nostril alone.
- Cools your body, activates your para-sympathetic nervous system and cures all diseases connected with *pita* or acidity.
- Relaxes your body and organs.
- In the end breathe out very slowly; hold outside, as long as comfortable.
- When you can't hold comfortably any longer, inhale very slowly and hold inside, as long as comfortable - just one time.

## 2. SURYA NADI PRANAYAMA (RIGHT NOSTRIL)

This *pranayama* is to be done for 2 minutes (or 11 times) only.

- Close your left nostril with your ring finger and exhale through the right nostril.
- Start deep and rhythmical breathing through right nostril only.
- Exhale through right and inhale through right.
- Your eye should remain closed.
- Concentrate on the breathing process.
- Remember the time of inhalation and exhalation should be equal, so recite mentally OM to count, and ensure the same number of exhalations and inhalations.
- Deep and rhythmical breathing through right nostril only.
- Do not change the nostril during the *pranayama*.
- Do not retain the breath, simply continue exhalations and inhalations.
- Heats up your body, cures all diseases connected with **cough**, improves your eyesight, makes your body more active and activates your sympathetic nervous system.
- In the end breathe out very slowly, hold outside as long as comfortable.
- When you can't hold comfortably any longer, inhale very slowly and hold inside, as long as comfortable - just one time.

## 3. ANULOMA VILOMA PRANAYAMA (ALTERNATE NOSTRIL)

This *pranayama* is to be done for 5 to 7 minutes minimum every day.

- Sit yourself in any comfortable *asana* - *padmasana*, *slddhasana*, or otherwise *sukhasana* and close your eyes.
- The head and neck should be straightened, but without tension.
- Your left hand on your left knee in *Jyana* or *chin mudra*.
- Fold the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> fingers of your right hand into your palm and use only the thumb and the ring finger. This is *nasika mudra*. Keep the arm comfortably in front of your body.
- Then close your right nostril with your right thumb.
- Breathe out through the left nostril, and breathe in through left nostril.
- Then close your left nostril with your ring finger and breathe out through the right nostril and breathe in through right.
- Deep and rhythmical breathing alternating from left to right nostril, completing one exhalation and inhalation on one side before switching to the other.
- Total concentration on the breathing process.
- Continue this for 5 to 7 minutes or 18 complete rounds (count every time you come to left and exhale).
- In the end when you come to your left nostril, breathe out and hold outside, as long as comfortable and recite mentally OM 4 to 6 times.
- Breathe in very slowly, hold inside, as long as comfortable and recite mentally OM 4 to 6 times.
- Close your left nostril, breathe very slowly out through the right nostril, hold outside and recite mentally OM 4 to 6 times.
- When you can't hold comfortably outside, breathe very slowly in, hold inside.
- Place your right hand also on your knee in *Jyana* or *Chin mudra* and finally breathe out through both nostrils.

**Benefits**

- It is most important *nadi shodhan pranayama* in yoga. It cleanses and purifies the whole *nadi* system.
- *Anulom Vilom pranayama* is good for cardio-vascular (heart and blood vessels) as also for cardio-pulmonary (heart and lungs) dysfunctions, and also removes the heart blockages some times.
- This is most important practice for the cure of all chronic diseases.

**4. BHASTRIKA PRANAYAMA (BOTH NOSTRILS TOGETHER)**

This *pranayama* is to be done for 2 minutes daily.

- Sit yourself in any comfortable posture - *padmasana*, *siddhasana* or otherwise *sukhasana*, and keep your eyes closed.
- The head and spine should be vertical.
- Put both your hands on your knees in *Jyana* or *chin mudra*.
- Start deep breathing through both nostrils together.
- Your focus should mainly be on inhalations, deep and rhythmical. The exhalations shall take care of themselves.
- Keep the head and spine erect during the whole practice.
- Keep your concentration on the breathing process.

**Benefits**

- It energizes your body with *pran*, improves digestion, purifies your lungs, and charges your brain with oxygen. The brain needs 20% of the total oxygen required by the body.

**FOUR ADDITIONAL PRANAYAMAS****5. KAPAL BHATI PRANAYAM**

This *pranayama* is to be done 5 to 7 minutes minimum every day.

In this *pranayama* your focus will be on exhalations, deep and rhythmical. The inhalations will take care of themselves.

- Sit your self in any comfortable posture as above.
- Keep the eyes closed and head and spine vertical.
- Breathe out and contract your abdomen. Inhalation will follow.
- Again breathe out and contract your abdomen.
- Do this practice rhythmically continuously for 50 to 60 times.
- Then take a small break for about 15-20 seconds.
- And again start the above practice, breathe out and contract the stomach - 50 to 60 times rhythmically, with out shaking your body.
- Again take a small break.
- Repeat the process for as many rounds as necessary to reach 350 to 360 *pranayamas*. That is, about 6 to 8 rounds of 50 to 60 times each.

- While doing the above practice keep your awareness on the *mooladhar chakra*.
- Recite mentally *AUM* and as you proceed and imagine that the *Mooladhar Chakra* has started shining and glowing with the light of *AUM*.
- Also imagine that with each exhalation you are throwing out all toxins from your body and negative thoughts from your mind.

### Benefits

- *Kapali bhati* is a wonderful *pranayama*, which takes care of the whole metabolic function of the body, removes imbalances and improves the working of the body.
- It takes due care of obesity problems.
- It helps to remove constipation and gives strength to all internal organs of the body.
- It is very powerful and effective *pranayama*.

## 6. TRI- BUND BAHYA PRANAYAMA (EXTERNAL HOLDING WITH THREE LOCKS) (JALANDHAR BUND, UDIYANA BUND AND MOOLA BUND ALL TOGETHER)

This *pranayama* is to be only 3 times every day.

- Breathe out, hold outside - *baiyah kumbhak*
- Contract your abdomen - pull your navel in, your anus up and press your chin onto your chest, keeping the spine erect.
- Concentrate on your navel.
- Recite mentally *OM*.
- When you can't hold comfortably any longer, first release your stomach, your lower portion and straighten your neck, then breathe in very slowly.
- This is also called **Maha-Bund** (Great Lock) in *Yoga* - *Jalandhar bund*, *Udiyana bund* and *Moola bund*, all together.

### Benefits

- It gives a general massage to all your inner organs, and improves their working.
- It has all other benefits of outside holding *pranayama* as lowering BP, working against diarrhea and depression.
- It also brings the navel in proper position. It means that if the navel is too much right or left, up or down, this practice will bring the navel in proper position.
- This *pranayama* moves the energy up from the *mooladhar chakra* that is generated in the *kapal bhanti pranayama*, opens and energizes all other *charkas* of the body - called *Kundilini Jagarana* (activation of all energy centers of the body) in *Yoga*.

## 7. BHRAMARI PRANAYAMA

This *pranayama* need be done for 3 to 5 times each day.

- Sit in any comfortable posture- *padmasana*, *siddhasana* or otherwise *sukhasana* with spine, neck and head straight in one line.

- Close both your ears with your thumbs and put your index fingers on your forehead, middle fingers on either side of your eyes, the ring fingers on your two nostrils to close them partially, and your small fingers on each side of your mouth.
- Now inhale deeply through your nostrils and recite *AUM* through your nose with mouth closed making a humming sound like that of the big bee with your nose for as long time as possible in one breath.
- Then take another deep breath in through the nose (mouth closed) and repeat *AUM* as above for the second time, and then for the third time.
- It energizes and purifies your body with the energy of *AUM*.

#### **Benefits**

- Long-term benefits in terms of mental equipoise and normalizing BP.
- It also prepares you for deep meditation.

### **8. ONKAR PRANAYAMA**

This *pramayama* may be done for 3 to 5 times each day.

- Sit in the same posture as in *Bhramari Pranayama*.
- Take a deep breath in and recite a long *AUM* finishing with closed lips.
- Repeat the same as above a second and a third or more times.
- Keep your concentration on your breathing process engaged in recitation of *AUM*.
- It purifies the outer environ around you and creates a healthy and congenial atmosphere all around.
- Thereafter sit for a minute (or two) keeping the speed of inhalations and exhalations very slow—slower than the normal 15-16 breaths per minute. It helps to induce meditation and increases life span.

With this we complete the DAILY SCHEME OF *PRANAYAMA* that we are all required to do every morning (and evening too, if possible and necessary)

#### **General Notes:**

1. Remember, in *PRANAYAMA* the head and spine should be vertical.
2. When you have fever, stop the practice and take one day additional rest.  
You can start again only when the fever is gone after one day more rest.
3. Do every thing very gently and comfortably. Don't put your self under any kind of strain.

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