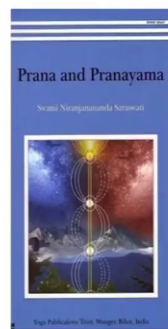


Yoga and Positive Psychology for Managing Career and Life
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Prana and Types of Pranayama
Lecture - 76
Pranayama Practices and Conscious Breathing

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Pranayama Practices



- I. Conscious Breathing
- II. Preliminary Breathing Methods
- III. Classical Pranayama

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Our focus is primarily on the Pranayama Practices. Most of these practices are taken from the from this book, the documentation is taken from this book. Most of these practices I have learned from the Patanjali foundations teacher learning program.

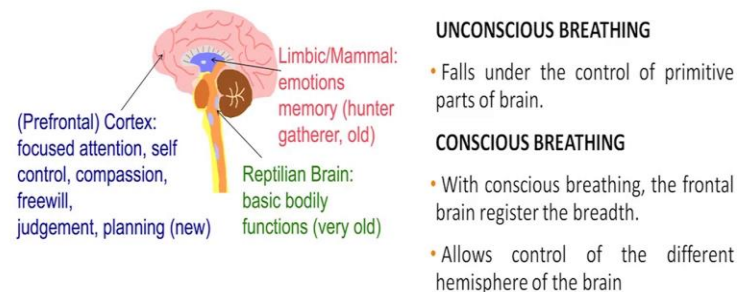
And also, have been benefited by the programs of art of living and inner engineering. And many of these practices I have learnt from these foundations, but the teacher training I took from the Patanjali foundations program. And the documentation part of it step-by-step process are taken from this book of Swami Niranjananand Saraswati.

He is with the Bihar school of Yog Munger and those who are interested to read further or to know these practices in more detail can refer this book. This book explains pranayama in 4 types, but here

we have taken 3 types only conscious breathing, preliminary breathing methods and classical pranayams.

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Functionalities of Brain and Conscious Breathing



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To understand conscious breathing, we must take note of the functionality of the brain. We have predominantly three types of three components of brain which are related to the different activities limbic brain, reptilian brain and prefrontal cortex. Reptilian brain is most evolved and it is primarily maintains or regulates the basic bodily functions coldness, dryness, managing territory, controlling our life situations that is related to that survival related things.

Limbic brain which first started evolving, first started appearing amongst the mammals, that limbic brain, that part of brain is related to the emotions memories. So, naturally it is related to relationships, association, building family, working together those aspects. So, that is the limbic brain.

And prefrontal cortex that is most evolved part of our brain; that is related to the most sophisticated executive function or cognitive activities like attention, self-control compassion, free will, judgment, planning etcetera. If we look at and if we distinguish conscious breathing with unconscious breathing, we find that unconscious breathing falls under the control of primitive parts of brain.

When we are unconsciously breathing only the primitive part of brain shows more activity. However, when we do conscious breathing the frontal brain start registering that activity and that becomes active. So, naturally when frontal brain is active, we have more control on different other activities we can be more conscious in making judgments, planning, being compassionate about others, we can self-control ourselves.

So, you might remember the allegory of chariot the mind is the rein through which the senses can be controlled that rein is powerful when we are consciously breathing. So, the control over the senses with that rein will come down will be loosened when we are engaged in the unconscious breathing.

So, the conscious breathing itself is the first pranayam. You might recall there is a very well developed field of practices and there is lot of research studies, there are lot of research studies associated with that field is called mindfulness. Mindfulness predominantly based on observing our breath without regulating it, without changing its intensity or speed, observing that breath, observing breath that is the essence of the mindfulness practices.

Similarly, this practice is done in a Buddhist tradition and this practice over there is called vipassana. There is a ethical moral and metaphysical aspect of the vipassana and that is equally important. Similarly, mindfulness also has a ethical moral basis that is equally important, but in terms of the practice mindfulness and vipassana to the core are nothing but conscious breathing.

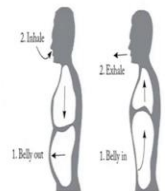
And just by conscious breathing we come to know, we become aware of the functioning of mind, how attachment takes place, how some of the events disturb us and how just by being observant about our breath we can control our senses, we can control our instincts, we can be more we can live more consciously.

So, there is a vast field in itself in the form of vipassana or in the form of mindfulness which is just based on conscious breathing. But pranayam is not only about conscious breathing, it is only the very first step, that is a basic thing.

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Preliminary Breathing Methods

Three basic mechanisms of breathing:



The diagram shows two human figures from the side, illustrating breathing mechanisms. The left figure is labeled '1. Belly out' and '2. Inhale', showing the diaphragm moving down and the chest expanding. The right figure is labeled '1. Belly in' and '2. Exhale', showing the diaphragm moving up and the chest contracting.

- Abdominal or Diaphragmatic: When action of diaphragm increases and decreases the size of thoracic cavity
- Thoracic or Chest
Expansion and contraction of rib cage
- Clavicular or Shoulder breathing

Combination of all three mechanisms is known as full yogic breathing which prerequisite of Pranayam.

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To understand the pranayam which is actually regulations, when the mindfulness they emphasize not to regulate breathing at all. But in pranayam that regulation is very much part of the practice and that the sense of practice rather. To understand how to control the breathing and what are the different forms of it; we need to understand a preliminary breathing methods.

So, there are three types of breathing methods. Abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing, thoracic breathing and clavicular or shoulder breathing. Abdominal breathing happens when action of the diaphragm increases and decreases the size of thoracic activity. The diaphragm is a muscular structure which is right below the ribs and that creates a boundary between the ribs or the thorax and our stomach.

If you see a child particularly when the child when a when a child is sleeping you can very clearly see the moment in his or her stomach that is the diaphragmatic breathing. So, when the diaphragmatic breathing takes place, the diaphragm goes up little bit. So, more comfortable experience occurs in the diaphragmatic breathing.

Thoracic breathing is when thorax area expands predominantly. And in the thoracic breathing breathe or the air is mostly centered in the upper part of the lungs. Whereas, abdominal breathing helps in increasing lower parts of the lungs as well.

Then comes clavicular breathing which is the side aspect which is the side structure of the lungs and when the air is filled there our shoulder also become little stiff. Yogic breathing is combination of all three. Normally we are engaged in the thoracic and clavicular or shoulder breathing. Yogic breathing, we are going to look at the glow yogic breathing is engaging in all three parts of breathing.

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Process for Conscious Breathing

1. Sit comfortably or lie in shavasana and practice *kaya sthairyam*.
2. Complete body stillness, for few minutes.
3. Don't try to change breathing pattern.
4. Observe natural process.
5. Become increasingly conscious of the breadth.
Is the breadth fast or slow, shallow or deep? Is there any gap between breaths?
6. Do not modify or control the breadth.
7. Keep your awareness on each exhalation and inhalation.
Say to yourself mentally, "I am aware that I am breathing in ; I am aware that I am breathing out." Continue this way.
8. Now count your breadth backwards from 27 to zero.
Mentally say, "I am aware that I am breathing in.....27, I am aware that..... I am breathing out 26," and so on.

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So, in this session let us look at how we can do the conscious breathing and this itself has a major calming effect. So, sit comfortably our lie in shavasana and carry out this practice of kaya sthairyam, that is loosening the body. You can sit down on the chair and then you can take your attention from the toes to ankle to the calf muscles to knees to lungs to gonads to stomach to chest to shoulders to neck and calm down these all organs.

Or you can lie down in shavasana and take your attention from toe to head gradually. And that process will calm down your active mental activities and that will give the sense of relaxation. So, that is a first step in conscious breathing. Be in this stage for few minutes if you are sitting on the chair or lying in shavasana, be in that state.

Be in that relaxed state for few minutes. And just observe, start observing breathing need not to change the breathing pattern, just observe this. As you continue to give attention to the breath, it

become more conspicuous to you, it becomes you become more aware to the speed, intensity and depth of your breathing.

Even at this stage when you are more aware of these aspects of breathing do not try to regulate it, just observe. Just observe is there a gap between the breaths, is it shallow, is it slow or is it deep. Keep your awareness on each exhalation and inhalation. And say it to yourself mentally that I am aware that I am breathing in, I am aware that I am breathing out.

Now, count your breath backward from 27 to 0. And mentally say that I am aware that I am breathing in 27, I am aware that I am breathing 26, 25, 24, 23 and continue this process up to 1. Mind naturally (Refer Time: 12:10) and if we are doing it after long time or if we are doing it first time, we can experience this wondering mind more intensely.

So, what I do if my mind get distracted during the time of counting. So, I start from 27 and by the time I reach 18 or 15, I am mind goes somewhere else. What do you need to do? You need to come back to 27 and start counting again, continue this process till the time without distraction you can count inversely from 27 to 1.

This may take few minutes maybe 5 minutes or 10 minutes, if you are doing it first time it may take even more. But experience the relaxation and sense of comfort you get after this simple conscious breathing process.

Thank you.