
samskaaram
Practice & Preserve for Posterity

WHAT?

“prANa प्राण” means “breath” and “AyAma आयाम” means control/restraint. So controlling the breath is called “prANAyAma प्राणायाम”. There are 2 types of prANAyAma : one “agarbha अगर्भ”and the other “sagarbha सगर्भ”. agarbha prANAyAma means breath control without meditation or japa. The sagarbha prANAyAma means breath control with meditaTion or japa. “sagarbha prANAyama” is the best.

bRuhad yogi yAgyavalkya smRuti 8.2

सव्याहृतीं सप्रणवां गायत्रीं शिरसा सह ।
त्रि: पठेदायतप्राण : प्राणायाम : स उच्यते ॥

savyAhRuteeM sapraNavAM gAyatreeM shirasA saha।
tri: paThedAyataprANa: prANAyAma: sa uchyatE ॥

One should chant the praNava Om, then the vyAhRutis, then the gAyatree mantra with its shiras while doing prANAyAmam.

WHY?

bRuhad yogi yAgyavalkya smRuti 7.190

एवं संमार्जनं कृत्वा बाह्यशुद्धयर्थमात्मन :
अथाभ्यन्तरशुद्धयर्थं प्राणायामान् समाचरेत्.

evaM saMmArjanaM kRutvA bAhyashuddhyarthamAtmana:
athAbhyantarashuddhyarthaM prANAyAmAn samAcharet.

While prOkshaNam is done for external purification, prANAyAmam is done for internal purification. We meditate on the vast expanse of the life force pervading the 7 worlds namely the bhoo, bhuva, suva, maha, jana, tapa and satyam while controlling our vital energy here.

WHEN?

1. prANAyAmam is done during sandhyAvandanam/sandhyOpAsana. It is performed 10 times before gAyatree mantra japam.

2. Generally in all karmAs like samidAdhAnam, hOma, upAkarmA, etc., Achamanam, prANAyAmam and prOkshaNam are performed as an act of purification.

HOW?

bRuhad yogi yAgyavalkya smRuti 8.10,19,22

पूरक : कुम्भको रेच्य : प्राणायामस्त्रिलक्षण :।
नासिकाकृष्ट उच्छ्वासो घ्मात : पूरक उच्यते ।
कुम्भको निश्चलश्वासो मुच्यमानस्तु रेचक : ।।
बाह्यस्थित नास्पुटेन वायुमाकृष्य तेनैव शनै :समन्तात्।
नाड्यश्च सर्वा: प्रतिपूरयेत्तु स पूरको नाम मरुन्निरोध : ।।

pooraka: kumBako rechya: prANAyAma-trilakshaNa:
nAsikAkRushhTa ucChvAso GmAta: pooraka uchyate.
kumbhako nishcalashvAso muchyamAnastu rechaka: bAhyasthita nAspuTena vAyumAkRuShya tenaiva shanai:samantAt. nADyashca sarvA: pratipoorayettu sa poorako nAma marunnirodha:

prANAyAmam has 3 characteristics.

1. rEchaka रेचक– the exhalation of the air slowly through the nostrils.

2. pooraka पूरक – the inhalation of the air slowly through the nostrils so as to fill all the nAdis with air.(the whole body)

3. kumbhaka कुम्भक – holding the breath in the nostrils tightly so that no air passes out through it or the mouth.

Procedure: First the right hand should be kept in “nAsagra mudrA”. (i.e) Fold your index finger and middle fingers of your right hand.. Close your left nostril

with your ring and little fingers and exhale air through your right nostril (rEchakam). No mantra is recited here. Then close your right nostril with your right thumb, release your left nostril and inhale air through the left nostril fully so that your stomach is filled and close it again with the ring and little fingers (poorakam). Now hold this breath unshaken, without releasing it through the nose or the mouth (kumbhakam). While holding the breath say the following deergha gAyatree mantra 3 times:-

ॐ भूः ॐ भुवः ओसुवः ॐ महः ॐ जनः ॐ तपः ओस॒त्यम्

ॐ तत्सं॒वि॒तुर्वरे॑ण्यं॒ भर्गो॑ दे॒वस्य॑ धीमहि । धियो॒ यो नः॑ प्रचो॒दया॑त् ॥

ॐ आपो॒ ज्योती॒रसो॒ऽमृत॑ं ब्रह्म॒ भूर्भुव॒ः सुव॒रोम् ।

Om bhooh, Om bhuvah, Ogum suvah, Om mahah, Om janah, Om tapaH, Ogum satyam. Om tat-savitur-vareNyam, bhargO devasya dheemahi, dhiyO yO nah prachOdayAt.

Om ApO jyOtirasO-amrutam brahma bhoor-bhuva-suvarOm.

Then release the right nostril and exhale air slowly, not suddenly. This process is one prANAyAmam. One can learn this from one's AchArya/guru first and then practise it.


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