

# YOGA RESEARCH

The Yoga Research Society Newsletter

Vol. 3, No. 11

May - July 1994

## Pranayama - The Inner Side of Ritual

Pranayama or the practice of breath-control is one of the most important and distinguishing methods for the practice of Yoga. The Upanishads are filled with references to Prana. Prana is identified with the supreme reality, Brahman, with the inner self, the Atman, and with Indra, the king of Gods. The five different types of Prana (Prana, Udana, Samana, Vyana and Apana) are mentioned showing the existence of a subtle science of life-force.

The *Upanishads* state:

The Self carries himself twofold, as the life-force (Prana) and as the Sun. Two are his paths within and without by which he revolves by day and by night. The Sun is the outer Self; the life-force is the inner Self. Hence by the movement of the outer Self, the movement of the inner Self is measured. But according to the Knower, who is free of sin, whose eye is turned within, it is by the movement of the inner Self that the movement of the outer Self is measured. (MaiU VI.1).

***The ancient seers used the movements of the Sun to understand the movements of the life-force in the body.***

The ancient seers used the movements of the Sun to understand the movement of the life-force in the body. This became the basis for the practice of Yoga. Yet according to their deeper vision, by meditating on the life-force within the body they also came to understand the movements of the Sun. In this way the science of the breath permeated the ancient solar religion.

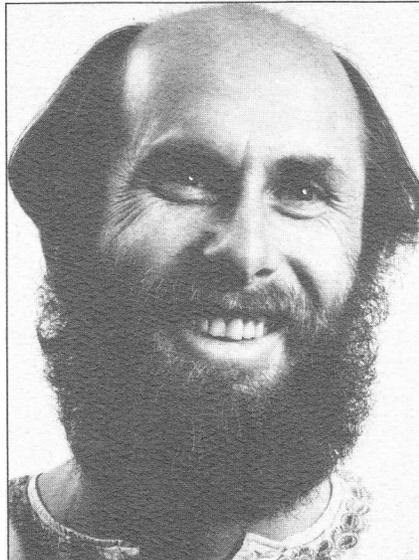
Prana is also very commonly mentioned in the *Brahmanas*, the ritualistic texts.

Breath is combined with the sacrifice or is a sacrifice in itself.

Savitar is the breath (AB I.19).

Soma is the breath (KB IX.6).

The kindling sticks for the sacred fire are the breaths...



DAVID FRAWLEY

The Divine invokers are expiration and inspiration (AB II.4).

The Upamshu and Antaryama cups are expiration and inspiration (AB II.21).

The cups for the two deities are the breaths (AB II.26).

The offerings to the seasons are the breaths (AB II.29).

The Prauga is a litany of the breaths; seven deities he celebrates; seven are the breaths in the head; thus he places the breaths in the head (AB III.3).

The Gods, the chants and the rituals are identified with the breath or made diversifications of the breaths, which are thereby stabilized by them.

"Forward" is the breath, for all these creatures advance following

after the breath; thus he creates the breath, he makes the breath perfect (AB II.40).

Therefore they say, "the breath is Vayu (God of the wind), seed is breath; seed comes into being first when man comes into existence." In that he recites a triplet to Vishnu, thus he makes his breath perfect. A triplet to Indra and Vayu he recites. Where there is expiration, there is inspiration; in that he recites a triplet to Indra and Vayu, thus his expiration and inspiration he makes perfect (AB III.2).

Through chants the Brahmins make their breath perfect. In Yogic literature mantras are also used to aid in Pranayama. Is this not a continuation of an ancient Vedic practice?

Verily does the Invoker establish speech and expiration and inspiration in the self, with a full life, for fullness of life; a full life he lives who knows this (AB III.8).

Here we see breathing practices giving longevity.

Breath is immortality, thus by immortality he crosses death (KB XIV.2).

Each quarter verse of these chants he recites, taking it separately; thus each breath he places in himself. With the last he utters the Pranava (Om); thus he lets go of this breath: therefore all the breaths breathe along this breath (KB XV.4).

**YOGA RESEARCH**

YOGA RESEARCH is published by the Yoga Research Society at 341 Fitzwater St., Philadelphia, PA 19147, (215) 592-YOGA.



Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Philadelphia, PA  
Permit No. 2935

**Yoga Research Society**  
341 Fitzwater Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19147

*"Nothing can bring you peace  
but yourself."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson



Printed on Recycled Paper

***Pranayama – The Inner Side of Ritual, continued***

We see from these quotes that the Vedic ritual, chant and breathing practices were combined together. Some sort of Pranayama practice was the inner side of the ritual. Krishna in the *Gita* describes the practices of various Yogis.

Some offer inspiration into expiration and others offer expiration into inspiration, controlling the path of inspiration and expiration, they practice Pranayama (BG IV.29).

This is not some novel practice but an old Upanishadic and Brahmanical method going back to the *Vedas*. The whole Vedic ritual thereby mirrors the practice of Yoga

and the movement of the breath through the chakras.

Many passages relating to the breath or Prana can be found in the *Yajur Veda* also.

May you purify my speech.  
May you purify my breath. May you purify my eye. May you purify my ear...May your mind be abundant. May your speech be abundant. May your breath be abundant (SYV III.14-5).

May your mind unite with the mind, your breath with the breath...May the ruling Prana be placed in all your faculties. May the ruling Udana (upward moving breath) be placed in all your faculties (SYV III.18-9).

The Vedic sacrifice is inwardly a purification of our faculties, including our breath, for the realization of truth, for putting back together the cosmic man (Indra) who is our true Self.

excerpted from **GODS, SAGES AND KINGS, *Vedic Secrets of Ancient Civilization*** by David Frawley, Passage Press, Salt Lake City, Utah

---

*David Frawley will be a featured speaker at the 1994 Yoga Research Society Conference.*

---

**YOGA**



**SEARCH FOR  
PEACE**

The 20th Annual  
Yoga Research Society  
Conference  
October 15 & 16, 1994  
Philadelphia

**Presenting  
The  
Swami Kavalayananda  
Yoga Research Prize**

Call (215) 592-YOGA  
for a brochure