



Meru Institute

Yoga ~ Ayurveda ~ Community Ministry

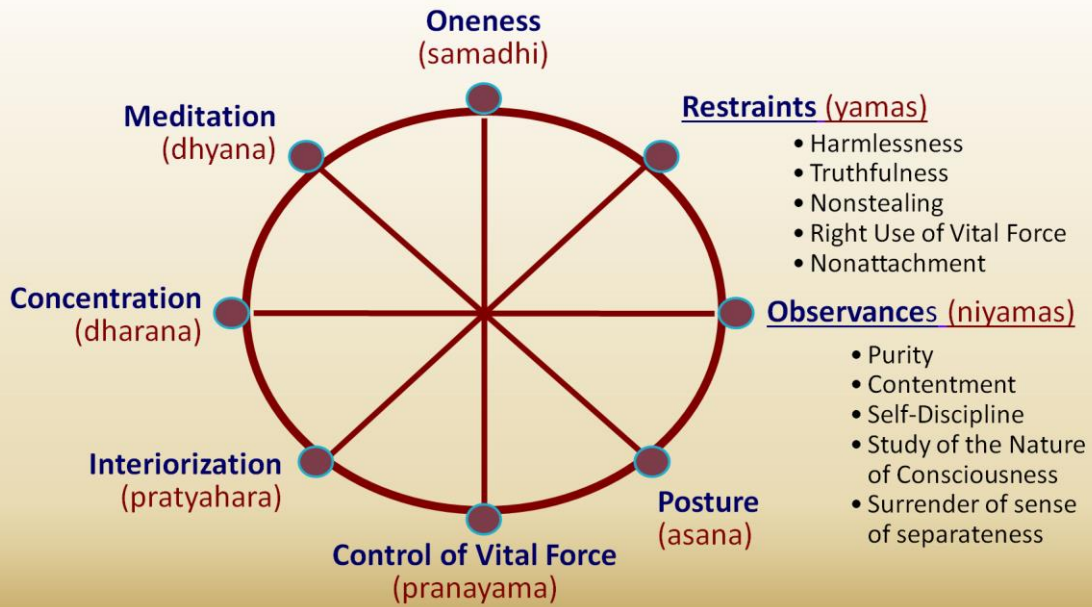
Introduction to Asana, Pranayama, and Pratyahara

Yogacharya Ellen Grace O'Brian

Saturday, October 4, 2015

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Eight Limbed Practice (*Ashtanga Yoga*)

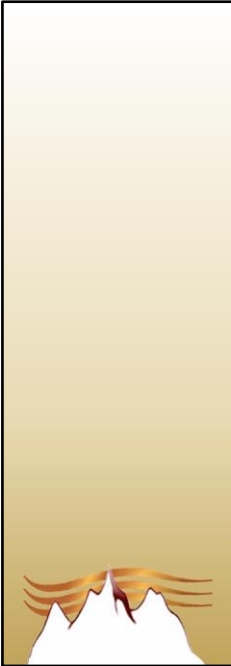


Awareness of prana is the golden key that unlocks the spiritual treasure hidden within the mind and body.

Prana is the treasure house of all energies. Through prana sadhana all sadhanas are done.

-Lahiri Mahasaya



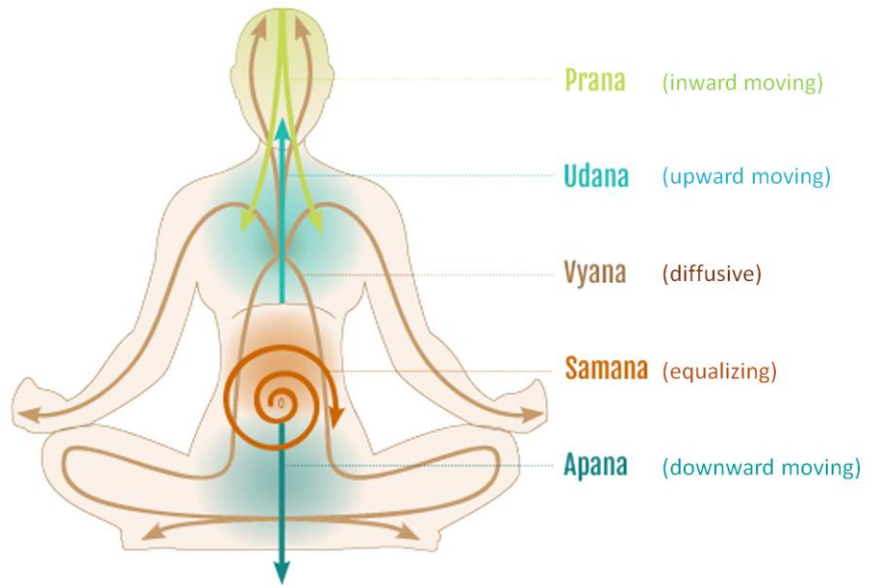


Prana has many levels of meaning—from the breath to the energy of consciousness itself. Prana is not only the basic life-force, it is the master form of all energy working on the levels of mind, life and body. Indeed the entire universe is a manifestation of prana, which is the original creative power.

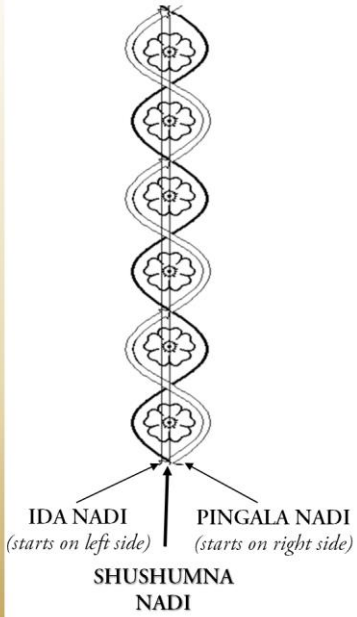
—Dr. David Frawley

p. 120-121 Yoga and Ayurveda

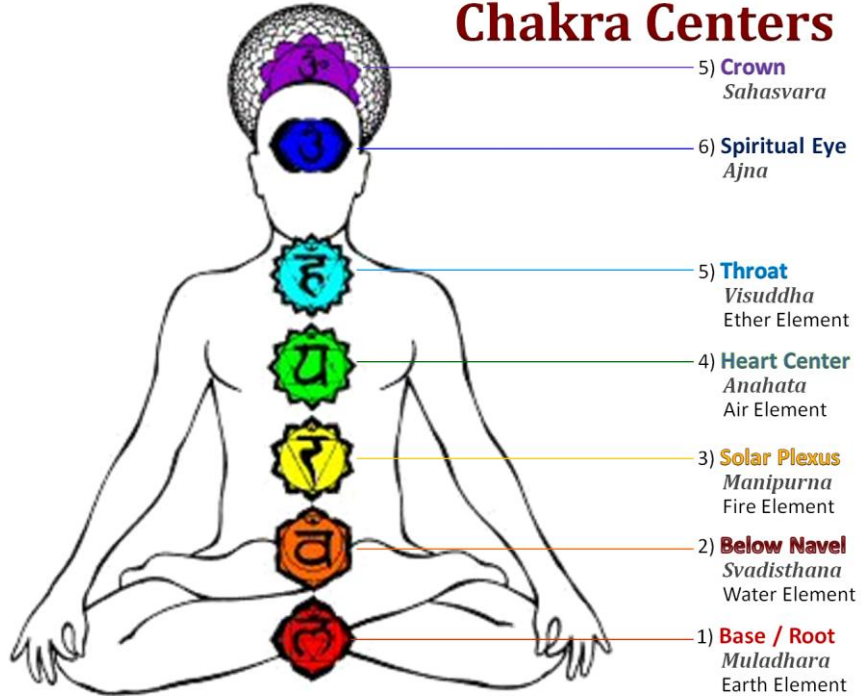
Five Prana Vayus



Nadis



Chakra Centers





Koshas (Sheaths)

Coverings of the Self

- Annamaya Kosha
- Prāṇamaya Kosha
- Manomaya Kosha
- Vijñānamaya Kosha
- Ānandamaya Kosha



Five Breaths Meditation

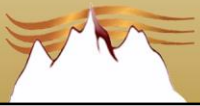
- **Annamaya**: physical
- **Prāṇamaya**: vital / energy
- **Manomaya**: mental
- **Vijñānamaya**: intellectual
- **Ānandamaya**: bliss

Either direct, intuitive, or imaginative experience of each sheath

Asana

46. The posture should be steady and comfortable.
47. Posture is mastered by relaxation of effort and absorption in the infinite space.
48. From that (mastery of posture), the pairs of opposites no longer disturb.

—*Patanjali's Yoga Sutra* (trans. Baba Hari Dass)





*From asana arises steadiness of body and mind,
freedom from disease and lightness of the limbs.*

—Hatha Yoga Pradipika 1. 17

Without proper asana to settle the prana, pranayama cannot proceed smoothly. Without proper asana to settle the senses, pratyahara or control of the senses is almost impossible. Without proper asana to settle the mind, concentration and meditation (dharana and dhyana) are very difficult. Those interested in the deeper stages of yoga should not neglect asana.

—Dr. David Frawley

Pranayama

49. On this (perfection of posture), the cessation of movement of inspiration and expiration of breath is called regulation of the breath (pranayama).
50. That pranayama is external, internal, and suspended. When regulated by space, time, and number, they become prolonged and subtle.
51. The fourth pranayama transcends the external and the internal.
52. From that pranayama, the veil over the light disappears.
53. And the mind becomes fit for concentration.





Kriya Pranayama

Offering the inhaling breath into the exhaling breath and offering the exhaling breath into the inhaling breath, the yogi neutralizes both breaths; thus he releases prana from the heart and brings life force under his control.

—Bhagavad Gita 4.29

The yogi arrests decay in the body by securing an additional supply of prana (life force) through quieting the action of the lungs and heart; he also arrests mutations of growth in the body by control of apana (eliminating current). Thus neutralizing decay and growth, the yogi learns life-force control.

—Paramahansa Yogananda, Autobiography of a Yogi



Kriya Pranayama

The Kriya Yogi mentally directs his life energy to revolve, upward and downward, around the six spinal centers (medullary, cervical, dorsal, lumbar, sacral, and coccygeal plexuses), which correspond to the twelve astral signs of the zodiac, the symbolic Cosmic Man. One half-minute of revolution of energy around the sensitive spinal cord of man effects subtle progress in his evolution; that half-minute of Kriya equals one year of natural spiritual unfoldment.

—Paramahansa Yogananda, *Autobiography of a Yogi*

Gayatri Mantra of the Ṛgveda

Om bhūr	Earth	Mūladhāra
Om bhuvah	Astral	Svādhiṣṭhāna
Om svaḥ	Celestial	Maṇupūra
Om māvā	Spiritual heart	Anāhata
Om janaḥ	Power of divine word	Viśuddha
Om tapaḥ	Power of austerities	Ājñā
Om satyam	Abode of supreme Truth	Sahasrāra

**Om̐ tat savitur vareṇyam̐ / Bhargo devasya dhīmahi /
Dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt**



Om Tat Savitur Varenyam:

that luminous essence of spiritual light, which is sought

Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi:

may meditation upon that light remove obstacles,
and purify our mind

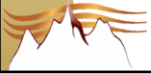
Dhiyo Yonaha Prachodayat:

May that (divine light) illumine our mind,
enlighten our intellect, guide and inspire us

Om. Let us meditate on the light of pure awareness.

May it purify our hearts and illumine our minds.

May it guide and inspire us. Om.



Pratyahara

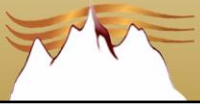
The term pratyahara is composed of two Sanskrit words, prati and ahara. Ahara means “food,” or “anything we take into ourselves from the outside.” Prati is a preposition meaning “against” or “away.” Pratyahara means literally “control of ahara,” or “gaining mastery over external influences.” ... The term is usually translated as “withdrawal from the senses,” but much more is implied.

—Dr. David Frawley



Pratyahara

54. Pratyahara is when the senses separate from their objects, following as it were the nature of the mind [withdrawn from the senses by concentrating on an internal object].
55. From that (pratyahara) comes the highest control of the senses.





Four Forms of Pratyahara

- **Indriya-pratyahara:** Control of the senses
- **Prana-pratyahara:** Control of vital force
- **Karma-pratyahara:** Control of action
- **Mano-pratyahara:** Withdrawal of the mind



Pancha Kosha Model

In its identifications with the five sheaths, the immaculate Self appears to have borrowed their qualities upon Itself, as in the case of a crystal which appears blue or yellow depending upon the color of the cloth in its vicinity.

Through discriminative self-analysis one should separate the pure Self within, from the sheaths, as one separates the rice from the husk, that covers it.

—Shankara, *Atmabodha* v. 15-16.

Yoga Therapy Example Using the Pancha Kosha Model for Therapeutic Intervention

- Shifts Viewpoint from Site of Pain or Suffering
- Opens Energy Flow / Increases Therapeutic Options
- Expands Consciousness
- Facilitates Return to the Self





Healing Interventions Using the Kosha Model

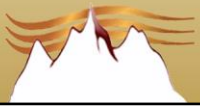
- **Physical:** *pain or restriction*
- **Mental:** *anxiety or confusion*
- **Spiritual:** *supporting transition*

Additional Interventions

Physical Sheath: Annamaya kosha	Yoga Postures (Asana) Lifestyle including Diet & Sleep Cleansing Techniques
Life Force Sheath: Pranamaya kosha	Breathing Exercises (Pranayama) Right use of vital force (Brahmacharya) Chakra Meditation or Therapy
Sense Mind/Emotional Sheath: Manomaya kosha	Mantra Mindfulness practice
Wisdom Sheath: Vijnanamaya kosha	Self-inquiry & spiritual study (Svadyaya) Practice Yamas/Niyamas Meditation
Bliss Sheath: Anandamaya kosha	Selfless service (Seva) Devotional practices (Bhakti yoga) Samadhi/Meditation

Group Discussion

- What are some therapeutic interventions you have experienced, or can think of, using asana, pranayama, pratyahara, the chakra, or kosha models of spiritual development and awareness?





*From joy are born all creatures,
By joy they grow, and
to joy they return.*

—Taittiriya Upanishad



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