

# Pranayama

Teachers Training

Level 1 May 28, 2022

History of Prana and  
Pranayama in the Vedas,  
Upanishads, and other  
Ancient Texts (not including  
Hatha Yoga period)



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श्री गुरुभ्यो नमः हरिः ॐ

Om Om Om

Sri Gurubhyo Namah Harih Om

Salutations to the Gurus!

ॐ सह नाववतु ।  
सह नौ भुनक्तु ।  
सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।  
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ।  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

oṃ saha nāvavatu saha nau bhunaktu  
saha vīryaṃ karavāvahai  
tejasvi nāvadhītamastu mā vidviṣāvahai  
oṃ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

May that Brahman protect us together. May it nourish us together. May we both gain great vitality. May our learning be brilliant. May we never argue. Om peace, peace, peace.

# History of Pranayama - Periods

1. **Vedic Period** Indian dates 5000 BCE, Western dates 1500-800 BCE
2. **Upanishadic Period** 800 BCE-200 CE (Indian dates earlier)
3. **Epic Period** 500-200 BCE Mahabharata, Ramayana
4. **Classical Yoga Period** 200-400 CE (Patanjali Yoga Sutras)
5. **Hatha Yoga Period** 1100-1700 CE (Hatha Yoga Texts)

# History of Pranayama - Upanishadic period

1. **Chandogya Upanishad** 6.8.2 nadis mentioned 6th/7th century BCE
2. **Brhadaranyaka Upanishad** 6th/7th century BCE
3. **Taittiriya Upanishad** 3.3 5th/6th century BCE
4. **Svetasvatara Upanishad** 1st/2nd century BCE
5. **Prashna Upanishad** multiple mantras on prana, beginning of CE

# History of Pranayama

## Pranayama during the Vedic and Upanishadic Period

1. Emphasis on ritual, used within religious ceremonies
2. Prana as universal life force
3. Used to harmonize oneself with the cosmos
4. No breath holding or ratios (such as nadi shuddhi)

## Smriti Period

1. Pranayama with Gayatri mantra or meditation on Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshvara, used as a part of a religious ceremony

## Puranic Period

1. Pranayama with Om
2. Not attached to religious ritual, but used independently for sadhana.
3. Breath holding and ratios introduced

# History of Pranayama

## Yoga Sutra Period

1. Pranayama becomes a practice within a science of liberation.
2. Four types of pranayama introduced
3. Repetition of Om abandoned
4. Emphasis on cessation of breath

## Hatha Yoga Period

1. Eight varieties of pranayama, with bandhas and mudras.
2. Physiological benefits of practices introduced.
3. Recaka, puraka, kumbhaka become new terminology.

# History of Pranayama

## Vedas/Upanishads Ritual

1. Universe is prana, individual is the universe

## Patanjali Practice

1. Mind is covered in avidya, removal of avidya is knowledge

## Hatha Yoga Purification

1. Subtle channels are filled with blockages
2. Purification of the blockages allows prana to flow in the central channel

# History of Pranayama

1. **Classical Yoga period**, pranayama was the cessation of the breath
2. **Hatha Yoga period** the holding of the breath
3. **Patanjali** used svasa, prashvasa, vritti, and stambha
4. **Hatha Yoga** uses rechaka, puraka, and kumbhaka
5. **Hatha Yoga** defines pranayama as kumbhaka, or holding of the breath
6. **Patanjali** defines pranayama as effortless ceasing of the breath

M.L. Gharote. [\*Kumbhaka Paddhati Of Raghuvira: Science Of Pranayama\*](#). Lonavala, 2016.

Swami Kuvalyananda. *Pranayama*. Kaivalyadhama, 2005 (11th Edition).

# History of Pranayama

## Purposes of Pranayama

1. In **Hatha Yoga** pranayama is to still the mind and prepare to move kundalini shakti into sushumna nadi
2. **Patanjali** does not discuss kundalini - pranayama is to prepare for dharana, dhyana, and samadhi

## References in Ancient Texts

There are many references to prana in the **Vedas**, including the **Prana Sukta of Atharva Veda**

(Book 11, Hymn 4 <https://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/av/av11004.htm>)

The **Baudhayanadharmas Sutras** are a group of texts that cover dharma and daily ritual (among other things), dating from 1000 BCE, and include pranayama with Gayatri within rituals:

<http://brahminrituals.blogspot.com/2011/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baudhayana\\_sutras](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baudhayana_sutras)

## Manusmriti Section 7, 6.70-85 (circa 3500 BCE)

प्राणायामा ब्राह्मणस्य त्रयोऽपि विधिवत् कृताः ।

व्याहृतिप्रणवैर्युक्ता विज्ञेयं परमं तपः ॥ ७० ॥

*prāṇāyāmā brāhmaṇasya trayo'pi vidhivat kṛtāḥ |  
vyāhṛtipraṇavairyuktā vijñeyaṃ paramaṃ tapaḥ || 70 ||*

Even three ‘breath-suspensions,’ accompanied by the three ‘vyāhṛti’-syllables and the syllable ‘om’, when duly performed, should be regarded as the highest austerity for the Brāhmaṇa.

दह्यन्ते ध्मायमानानां धातूनां हि यथा मलाः ।

तथेन्द्रियाणां दह्यन्ते दोषाः प्राणस्य निग्रहात् ॥ ७१ ॥

*dahyante dhmayamānānām dhātūnām hi yathā malāḥ |  
tathendriyāṇām dahyante doṣāḥ prāṇasya nigrahāt || 71 ||*

Just as the impurities of metallic ores are consumed when they are blasted, even so are the taints of the senses consumed through the suspension of breath.

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/manusmriti-with-the-commentary-of-medhatithi/d/doc200632.html>

# Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana

**Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana** a very interesting Upanishad that discusses, among other things, pranayama, vayu, chanting of Om, Gayatri, the Devas, and spiritual liberation (book 3 is especially relevant). This text forms a part of the Kena Upanishad, and dates to 6th century BCE.

[chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/viewer.html?](chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/viewer.html?pdfurl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.safarmer.com%2FIndo-Eurasian%2FOertel-Jaiminiya.pdf&cLen=7038631&chunk=true)

[pdfurl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.safarmer.com%2FIndo-Eurasian%2FOertel-Jaiminiya.pdf&cLen=7038631&chunk=true](chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/viewer.html?pdfurl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.safarmer.com%2FIndo-Eurasian%2FOertel-Jaiminiya.pdf&cLen=7038631&chunk=true)

# Mahabharata 12.294.7, 8

(Dated somewhere between 1924 BCE and 3137 BCE,  
see <https://www.ece.lsu.edu/kak/Mahabharata11.pdf>)

योगकृत्यं तु योगानां ध्यानमेव परं बलम् । तच्चापि द्विविधं ध्यानमाहुर्वेदविदो जनाः ॥ ७ ॥

yogakṛtyaṃ tu yogānāṃ dhyānameva paraṃ balam | taccāpi dvividhaṃ dhyānamāhurvedavidō janāḥ || 7 ||

Of the practicing yogis, dhyana is the greatest strength; of these there are said to be two paths of dhyana among people.

एकाग्रता च मनसः प्राणायामस्तथैव च । प्राणायामस्तु सगुणो निर्गुणो मनसस्तथा ॥ ८ ॥

*ekāgratā ca manasaḥ prāṇāyāmastathaiva ca | prāṇāyāmastu saguṇo nirguṇo manasastathā || 8 ||*

One pointedness of mind and pranayama are indeed are two methods of mastery of mind; pranayama is with form, and the ekagrata without form.

# Bhagavad Gita 5.27-28

स्पर्शान् कृत्वा बहिर् बाह्यांश् चक्षुश् चैवान्तरे भ्रुवोः ।  
प्राणापानौ समौ कृत्वा नासाभ्यन्तर-चारिणौ ॥ २७ ॥  
यतेन्द्रिय-मनो-बुद्धिर् मुनिर् मोक्ष-परायणः ।  
विगतेच्छा-भय-क्रोधो यः सदा मुक्त एव सः ॥ २८ ॥

*sparśān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāṃś cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ |*  
***prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantara-cāriṇau || 27 ||***  
*yatendriya-mano-buddhir munir mokṣa-parāyaṇaḥ |*  
*vigatecchā-bhaya-krodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ || 28 ||*

He who is free from desire, fear and anger completely removes external sense objects, such as sound and touch, from his mind. He then fixes his vision between his eyebrows and suspends the movement of the inward and outward flowing life-airs, which move through the nostrils. In this way, he balances the life-airs, controls his senses, mind and intelligence, and dedicates himself to attaining liberation. Certainly, such a sage is ever-liberated.

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/shrimad-bhagavad-gita/d/doc419925.html>

# Bhagavad Gita 4.29-30

अपाने जुह्वति प्राणं प्राणेऽपानं तथापरे ।

प्राणापान-गती रुद्ध्वा प्राणायाम-परायणाः ।

अपरे नियताहाराः प्राणान् प्राणेषु जुह्वति ॥ २९ ॥

*apāne juhvati prāṇaṃ prāṇe'pānaṃ tathāpare |*  
***prāṇāpāna-gatī ruddhvā prāṇāyāma-parāyaṇāḥ |***  
*apare niyatāhārāḥ prāṇān prāṇeṣu juhvati || 29 ||*

Others, who are steadfast in controlling the life force, offer the up-going breath into the down-going breath and conversely offer the down-going breath into the up-going breath. Having stopped both the up-going breath and the down-going breath, they dedicate themselves to controlling the various life-air. Others, while checking the eating process, offer their up-going breath into down-going breath itself, as a sacrifice.

# Vayu Purana, 300-500 BCE

**Vayu Purana, 300-500 BCE** (one of the oldest Puranas, mentioned in the *Mahabharata*)

Chapters 10 and 11 are fascinating early accounts of pranayama in what is called

## **Pashupata Yoga:**

*Five eternal dharmas are proclaimed by the great lord.*

*These are pranayama, dhyana, pratyahara, dharana, and smarana. 10.72*

*Controlling the vital breath is called pranayama 10.74*

*A lion or an elephant or any other wild animal of the forest on being captured and tamed becomes mild and quiet. Similarly, though the vital breath is difficult to be controlled in the case of non-self-possessed persons, it can be controlled by practice of yoga if done regularly. 10.78-79*

<https://archive.org/details/VayuPuranaG.V.TagarePart1/page/n153/mode/2up>

# Vocabulary

**Shruti** - Revelation; that which has been heard by the rishis in their meditations (the mantras of the Vedas)

**Smrti** - That which has been told and remembered; the epics such as Mahabharata and Ramayana

**Vedas** - From the root vid, to know; knowledge; the collection of mantras that form the basis of Hinduism, categorized into four books, Rig, Yajus, Sama, and Atharva

**Upanishads** - Lit. “to sit near”; the metaphysical teachings found at the end of each Veda

**Sutras** - A literary form that conveys philosophical positions in short, terse, sentences, further elaborated on in commentaries

**Samhitas** - Lit. “put together”; a collection of mantras found in the earliest parts of the Vedas. Post Vedic times, samhita refers to a systematic compilation of knowledge

**Pradipika** - Lit. “Light on...”; a text that illuminates a particular doctrine.

**Puranas** - Lit. “ancient or old.” A literary form that encompasses over 400,000 verses in 18 major and 18 minor texts. Based on Vedic teachings, but classified as smriti.

**Itihasas** - Lit. “And so it happened;” a class of purana where the author witnessed the events him or herself (such as the Valmiki Ramayana, or Mahabharata.)

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः  
सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।  
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु  
मा कश्चिद्दुःखभाग्भवेत् ।  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

oṃ sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ  
sarve santu nirāmayāḥ  
sarve bhadrāṇi paśyantū  
mā kaścid duḥkha bhāgbhavet  
oṃ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

May all be happy, may all be free from disease, may all see goodness,  
may none suffer from sorrow.

ॐ असतो मा सद्गमय ।  
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।  
मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय ।  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥ हरिः ॐ तत्सत् ॥

asato mā sadgamaya  
tamasomā jyotir gamaya  
mrityormāamritam gamaya  
Om śhānti śhānti śhāntiḥ harih om tat sat

Lead me from changing existence to unchanging being,  
lead me from the darkness of tamas to the light of knowledge,  
lead me from death to immortality. Harih om that is truth.