



VINYASA KRAMA YOGA

The Dance of Breath

Weekends 2 & 3 Notes

In this online yoga course, there are many videos offering many kinds of practices within the broader context of Vinyasa Krama Yoga. **Find what works for you and your goals.**

The ideal of this system is to practice with a quiet mind using the long Ujjai breath as expressed in the full traditional vinyasas (minimum count: 6 inhale, 3 pause, 6 exhale, 3 pause) and to memorize the sequences so the body moves automatically and the mind can repose in the saturation of the breath/prana.

However, the reality of a busy family/working life and particular demands on the body might mean the shortened versions work better for you right now. I have offered the full traditional version of Talasana of 148 postures (as per Swami Vidyadishananda) in its complete expression. I have also included a shortened version which draws more from the approach presented to me by Srivatsa Ramaswami. If time is limited or if the full sequence feels overwhelming to you, I hope the shortened version will gently inspire you to maintain the practice.

As we are a school of classical Indian dance - a system of art immersed in the yogic understanding of the body, I have shared practice videos in this course that focus on preparation and cool down from dance. Always centered on the deep Ujjai breath, some sequences have been deliberately composed as short excerpts for convenience of time. You may use these before or after dance depending on your needs.

The practice effects us simultaneously on so many levels from subtle to gross body. What ever may be your intention or reason for practicing, as long as the breath is consistent, graceful, and filled with gratitude, the practice will open the subtle body, in turn allowing the physical body to blossom in a natural rhythm that respects your body's innate intelligence and is deeply healing on all levels. Injury cannot occur if we are present in the breath, therefore present in the body. Never force a movement, simply allow the breath to guide you.





Looking at the body through the lens of the Koshas (as mentioned in Upanisads)

Annamaya - Physical body

Prānamaya - Energetic body

Manomaya - Mental body

Vijñānamaya - Intellect body

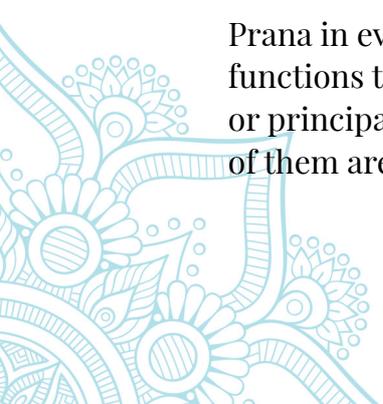
Anandamaya - Bliss body (subtlest) = beyond that is *Brahman*

Some Vinyasa Krama Yoga Points of Practice:

- The mind is focused on the breath.
- Ujjai Breath: Ideal beginning breath is 6 IN, 3 Pause, 6 EX, 3 Pause
- Kriya / Pratikriya: Expansion / Contraction
- Pranayama / Vinyasa practices are best done on an empty stomach. In a clean Sattvic space with fresh air. After morning shower.
- Pranayama can only be mastered with the feeling that the time offering is sacrificial - offered with belief to a general cause.
- Habitual engrossment — Engrossment is the goal (*samapathi*). The practice thrives on immersion in the quality of stillness. When the practice matures - you are constantly in that awareness - the effect of stillness or “the after effect poise”.
- Pranayama should be practiced even if the asana is not perfected.
- Vinyasa is ideally memorized so the mind can focus on one single thought construct/ object of contemplation = the breath. Flowing graceful movements automatically happening if the breath is steady.

PRANA

Prana in every body divides itself into 5 specific entities initiating different functions to maintain life. This one total life force also is called *mukhya prana* or principal life force. We have one life force doing a number of functions, yet 5 of them are said to be vital. They are:



	Governing Element	Primary Site in Body	Function	Direction of flow
PRĀNA	Ether (plasma)	Head, Brain, throat	Pūrana: to fill space	Inward & Downward
APĀNA	Earth	Lower abdomen, Colon, pelvic cavity (core)	Dhārana: holding	Outward & Downward
UDĀNA	Air	Diaphragm, Throat	Udvahana: Moves upward	Upward
SAMĀNA	Fire	Small Intestines, navel	Viveka: splitting isolating, seperating	Linear (some say spiral)
VYĀNA	Water	Heart, Whole body	Prasandanam: Pulsation	Circular, Circulation - spreading outward

Yoga centers around prāṇayama - this slowly brings the autonomic prana to voluntary control. The whole process of yoga starts with controlling the prana vayu through pranayama.

PRANAYAMA

“Concentration is depended on the rhythm of restful breathing”

- His Holiness Swami Vidyadishananda

Yoga views the breath as the cusp of the tangible and intangible, the gross and the subtle. Breath therefore is the forerunner of mindfulness - presence. Pranayama is a practice of rejuvenation and allows one to rest in their own abundance. The breath is not necessarily prana. Prana is more subtle than the breath.

- **Prāna** - life force / vital energy
- **Yama** - to restrain, restrict or *regulate



Prānasthāna: the place of breath
Parāvastā: 'after effect saturation'

The Yoga Upanishads describes the quality of a masterful Ujjai breath:

INHALE should be like drinking from the straw of a blue lotus

EXHALE is like pouring oil

Exhale is typically given first importance - emotions tend to restrict first the exhale. It is said the quality of the exhale reveals the mastery of pranayama. Always start pranayama with an exhale to clear out 'stale air' / excess carbon dioxide trapped in the lungs. Exhale marks the part in the breath that releases carbon dioxide, this is the part of the breath associated with grief and sadness, while oxygen is associated with bliss

Physiological Benefits: Pranayama allows the body to blossom with the subtle flow of prana. Awareness of breath - releases the pressure of time (general dread, fear, anxiety). A restless mind practicing forceful breathing is not pranayama. Yoga philosophy considers emotional disturbances the primary obstacle to yoga, second to physical disturbances. We have all experienced how emotions can affect our physical state!

UNDERSTANDING OF PRANAYAMA:

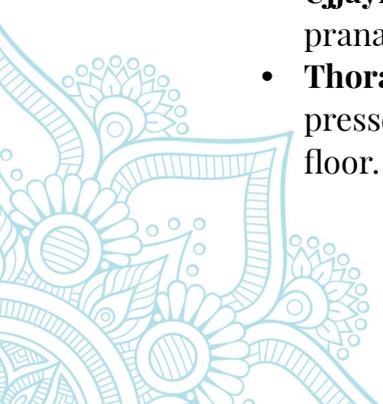
- **Cleanses the *nadi*** and rejuvenates the body with fresh energy - oxygenates the blood/body
- **Stills the mind** - anchoring in time (now) /space (body)
- **Releases toxicity** - subtle: emotions, gross: 80% of body's toxins released through the breath!
- **Purifies the sense organs** - prepares for higher levels of awareness

Right Nostril: *Pingula* - *Surya* (sun)

Left Nostril: *Ida* - *Chandra* (moon)

UJJAI BREATH

- **Ujjai breath It is the breath of victory**, it is the foundation breath. Most pranayama practices utilize it as a base breath.
- **Thoraco-Pelvic Breathing:** particularly on the inhale, the diaphragm pressed down and engages with the psoas muscles - pressure on pelvic floor. Feel the cylinder of the thoracic cavity filling up.



- **Breath is initiated from the body's 'core':** 5 fingers below the navel - the 'seat of power' (*jathara agni*)
- Lightly constrict the throat by bringing it into a **half Jalandhara Bandha**, breathe through the nose.

YOGA IN RELATION TO YOUR DANCE PRACTICE

- Through pranayama the physical body experiences increased circulation, oxygenation, and therefore a release of toxins (such as lactic acid built up from dance)
- This allows the muscle tissues to open and blossom, bringing increased blood/oxygen supply to the muscles, ligaments and fascia.
- This opening occurs first at an energetic level - prana, then at a physical level.
- Increased circulation causes flexibility, a decrease in pain and prana saturation assists in a balancing of emotions and concentration.

IDEAL PRACTICE TIPS

Before Practice:

- **Praying to the Source of Prana** - Morning meditation, prayer, gratitude, puja, etc. What does that mean to you? One simple practice is when you wake up first thing in the morning, look into the palms of the hands and chant:

Om pūrnāmadah pūrnāmidam pūrnāt pūrnāmudachyate |
Pūrnasya pūrnāmadaya pūrnāmevavashisyate |
Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaanti: |

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

A CHANT OF ABUNDANCE/ FULLNESS FROM UPANISHAD

OM, the outer world is full, this inner world is also full
From fullness (*purna*), fullness is manifested
Taking fullness from fullness, fullness indeed remains
Om, Peace, Peace, Peace

- **Abhyanga** - warm oil massage: reduces vata.
- **Bath with cold water** - removes tamas: splash eyes and crown with cold water
- Practice yoga with an empty belly - first thing in the morning is ideal

Suggested Practice Before Dance: Increase heat

- Heating pranayama, (*Kapalabhati*)
- Talasana: start in familiar place: drop into the bhav: concentration. Joints, Shoulders
- Vajrasana: breath and bandhas - nadis in the legs and knees - flush with circulation
- Konasana: all subtle degrees of opening in hip joint. Strength in the center line - flow
- *Hip strength: 4th video on Yoga practice Flows - warm up
- *Legs & Hips sequence in daily essentials series

After Dance: cool down

- Cooling pranayama, (*shiitali*)
- Spine: loosen / release spine
- Hips: stretch / release
- Back Line: *Paschimottanasana* (forward bend) - stretching back line
- Lateral Line: side bending
- End with passive stretch *suptabaddhakonasana* - *shavasana*
- Gentle passive inversion: *viparitarani* - rest legs up the wall
- At night - shavasana listening to classical Rāga music, cooling pranayam, abhyanga massage
- *Healthy spine awareness: Segmental bridging (therapeutic practice to reset lumbar curve)
- *Seated supine: daily essentials

