

Lesson 25: Online Education in Yoga by Sri Prashant Iyengar: Pranayama Part 3

In the last session, we had embarked upon the topic of pranayama and it continues today. All the asana and pranayama are two different things, as conceived by usually everyone, and these are considered two different limbs of each other in yoga. We tend to draw a line, or we erect a wall between asana and pranayama. So as far as practice of pranayama is concerned, of course, there's a clear demarcation and it gets totally differentiated from asana aspects. However, when it comes to teaching of pranayama, particularly, initialising someone into pranayama, traditionally and classically, and quite a logic and reason behind it that asanas become wonderful academy for one of the major aspects of pranayama is breath usage. And one will be given a facility to understand the acts, functions, roles, manifestations and purposes of breathing and breath by various asanas. The breathing would be different as you recall I had said that the breathing of supta veerasana and adho mukha veerasana radically differs.

Not only the breathing differs, the purpose, function, act, role of breathing changes. Therefore in various asanas, one would be inducted to various processes of breathing various functions of breathing, various purposes of breathing, various acts and roles of breathing and it is so important to be embarking upon pranayama.

As I said, it is a regulation of the breath and there is no point in regulation unless you are well oriented with regards to countless acts, purposes, functions processes of breathing. And asanas is wonderful academy for that purpose. Therefore as I said last time at least 10- 20% of practice should be dedicated to develop necessary observations, necessary studies, necessary learnings, necessary experimentations to know how the breath works. It's a fascinating agency given to us.

We don't just breathe for respiratory purpose, we breathe for the act itself. If climbing the mountain, climbing the hill, you will be developing a kind of breathing which facilitates your act of climbing up or climbing down. You don't keep your breathing as it is going on in respiration while you're climbing up, climbing down, doing some extraordinary feats of physical body, so also for every extraordinary act of mind intellect portion there is corresponding breath and breathing.

That's why in the science of yoga, philosophy of yoga, technology of yoga it is said that breath and mind are two sides of the same coin. The mind has several roles, several functions in our business activity of life. Mind plays variegated roles, enormous roles, and that we can identify. So again as a part of study in pranayama, somewhere try to understand various functions of the mind, various functions of the body, and for every kind of act of body and act of mind, there is a kind of breath and breathing

Whenever you are taking a special endeavour in the body like to sit as a special endeavour, some people would find it difficult to be sitting down. How do they sit? And then, when they get up from sitting position, how do they get up? So we know that there's struggle to sit and struggle to get up. We don't see that there is a corresponding breath for their act which is not a, easy act, which is not a natural act for them to be sitting or standing, or standing to sitting or sitting to standing. It becomes a special endeavour. Wherever there is special endeavour, there is the breath coming as a very important contributing factor, assisting factor. So also when there is an extraordinary act of the mind, there is corresponding breath.

Say, have you ever observed that if it is an act of will and volition – “I am going to do” – there is an inhalative act for that. You inhale typically for will, volition, or such kind of act of the mind. Or when you are saying “I surrender, I supplicate” there is a kind of breath for every mental act - supplications, surrender, or commanding, demanding, taking commands, giving commands, it is not just different oratory act, and it's not just different mental act – there is also physical gesture. “I am going to do” is done with a inflation of the chest. “I am going to do” is not done with collapsed chest. So there is body language behind all that. So behind the body there is mind and behind the mind, there is body. But more prominently, there is breath behind body and breath behind mind. Various acts of body, various acts of mind, is a matter of observation. So as students of yoga, you need to have this observation.

Sometimes, how for physical act there is a corresponding breath, how for a mental act there is a corresponding breath. And therefore there are enormous breathing physiologies. It's not just a mechanical process that you have one physiology of breathing. In various states of mind, various moods of mind, various acts of mind, there is corresponding breathing process and therefore there is, it's a very flexible physiology of breathing. Basically, mind and breath are two sides of the same coin is a kind of precept in yoga. So we think of studying psychology for mind, and we fail to catch or study the other side of the same coin. If the mind is head, the tail of the coin is breath! And therefore if there is study of mind, by psychology, study of mind also by breath and study of breath in psychology is also so important or studying the mind is so important, because they are two sides of the same coin.

This has not dawned upon the modern science of mind. They don't consider the breath as the other side of the mind; but whereas in yoga, that is a postulation that mind and breath are two sides of the same coin. So yoga carries out both studies of mind and studies of breath. That is why it is a complete science of study of the mind. Unless the breath is studied, you can't study the mind. Unlike the notion in modern psychology, they have disregard for the breath, absolutely, they just want to study the mind. This is having a lot of flaw. So yoga does both - breath studies and mind studies. They are integrated studies. They have to be studied. You can't just study the head of the coin, thinking that there is no tail in the coin. There can be no coin without tail, tail of the coin. Or there can be no head without the head of the coin or tail of the coin or tail of the coin. They are co-existing – they go together.

Therefore head and tail is mind and breath. Head and tail is body and breath. Tell me - where is no breath, tell me! In which act of yours there is no breathing? And because you should recall that when I said breathing, it is all the three – inhalative, exhalative, retentive. So three put together is breathing aspect. Not just in breath and out breath. So tell me where is the condition that there is neither in breath, supporting or significant nor exhalation, significant and supporting nor retention. There is no act in life where these three are insignificant, or not to be reckoned with. So asanas is wonderful academy since we have varieties of body movements, body actions, body positions, how body breath are related to each other is important aspect of study.

And in asanas we also have to, we will be addressing the mind as well. It cannot be no addressal to mind, and just addressal to body – then they are postures. So in postures you can disregard the mind and just carry out the posture, but in asanas, that is not allowed. That is not at all possible. So we will be seeing the mind as a back side of body, as well as the back side of the mind. And there is enormous scope to carry out the breath studies. There are various phases in asanas – doing, staying, maintaining, access, intensity, freedom, settled condition., everywhere the breath is coming in variegated ways. So also, doing, learning, studying, understanding, comprehending, analysing and various acts for knowledge, the breath is very much significant force.

The breath to attempt an asana is one kind of breathing, but the breath to get settled in asana is another kind of breathing. You won't be getting settled in posture without any consideration the breath, corresponding breath. So asana is wonderful academy, therefore 10-20% of your asanaic endeavour must be dedicated to carry out the study, breath observation, breath addressals, breath usages, breath applications, both the breath as benefactor and beneficiary, and then identify the benefits of the breath. Unless you are educated about benefits of the breath, how are you going to regulate it? Would you like someone to regulate it, without knowing your benefits and without considering your benefits. Then that is exploitation, that is anarchy, anarchy. If somebody is just regulating and controlling you, without considering your benefits, you won't like it. That will be dictatorial. So you can't be considering the breath regulation as the very nomenclature suggests, without understanding, identifying, and making provisions for benefits of the breath. If you want to use someone, you should also consider the benefits of that person. And do necessary things so that the person has the benefits.

So if breath is used in asanas, benefits to the breath must be identified. Breath is applied in asanas, benefits of the breath must be identified. So also, breath must be addressed. So all this education comes in asana, provided it is taken. Usually we don't take it because we consider asanas as postures and something as a physical culture, and we disregard the breath. So that's why asana is wonderful academy to become literate about breath. To getting one just only introduced to the breath, you're all breathing – We all breathe for lifelong - seventy, eighty, ninety, hundred years. But you will have no introduction to breath, sufficiently. People die, die without having known the breath. They die using the breath

lifelong, but they have no introduction to the breath. So yoga introduces this culture. That you must know something about the breath. As to what this agency is, what is this entity, what is this agency, what are its functions, how it is a benefactor and how it can be given benefits. Yoga only considers that.

So, it won't be exaggeration that we are all, even if we live very long and successful life, it is under utter exploitation of the breath and breathing. That's very, very unfortunate. And not only unfortunate, it's highly unjustifiable. The agency which is very subsistence and for every act, in every moment in our life, for every stage in our life, every act in our life, we are not getting introduced to it, which is very, very unfortunate. And it is unjustifiable. Sin.

Therefore, yoga gives this wisdom that you must consider the breath, try to know the breath, get acquainted with the breath. People live for 80,90 years incessantly with the breath and breathing and no acquaintance with the breath. This doesn't justify. Humanness. It is inhuman. It is inhuman that we have not even acquaintance with the breath, but we are using it. And therefore, asana is wonderful academy for that purpose.

Now this is a traditional wisdom, this doesn't come in texts. All the texts will tell you, they will tell you how to do asana, pranayam, they will never say single word about how to teach because, learning and teaching is customised. It changes from person to person. Therefore, a text cannot be mentioning all that. So how yoga is done will be described by texts. It will never describe how yoga should be taught, and how yoga should be learned. This is only something that is tradition, it has traditionally come to us; this is traditional wisdom.

So the pranayama book will teach you, tell you about so many different pranayams – ujjayi- anuloma-pratiloma, surya bhedan, Chandra bhedan, bhrastika, brahmari, plaavini, etc. various pranayams – they will tell you about various pranayamas. How to do, perhaps they will teach. How to learn, no book will teach and that is not at all a book matter. That's why there is a long long tradition - guru-shishya parampara. And that, guru-shishya parampara can only cast light on how to teach and how to learn. No text will tell you. Patanjali's text doesn't teach you how to learn yoga. It will tell you what is yoga and how to do yoga. But will you not need to learn before you do? What is there all in your life, that you can do without learning? How many things are there, unless you learn you can't do? So natural things you don't have to learn, you will do it. Instinctively you do not have learn, you will do it. But all the other things, we need to get educated. That is why this endeavour to get educated in yoga.

Anyway, so point is, asanas are such an important academy, let me not elaborate much more on that in just one session here. Secondly, it is called pranayama, it is not called shvasayama. But see what is really practiced – you're only given instructions of the breath. Inhale and exhale, or inhale and retain and exhale. Or exhale, retain and inhale. So this all reference is to breath- breathing. Breathe deep, breathe profound, breathe slow, etc. etc. So we are just dealing with respiratory breathing. That is why in our classical, non classical pranayama, there is stress on becoming breath aware and then use the breath in the nose,

sense the breath and make it long, make it deep, make it slow etc., etc. But then in that case, it should have been called shvaasaayaama. It is not called shvaasaayama. Why is it called pranayama?

We are dealing with the breath. The breath is not life force. The breath is for life force. Breath itself is not life force. Because once the life force has departed from the body and it has become a corpse, any amount of pumping the air in, is not going to animate the person, animate the life. So, it is not life force. Breath is not life force. It is for the life force. Life is something different which comes and which goes out, and as long as it stays with us, we keep on breathing, we must breathe. So, breath is not really life force, it is for the life force. It is by the life force. As long as the life force is there, you will breathe. Or as long as you breathe, there will be life force. These are 2 separate entities. Otherwise you can be keeping the respiratory pump on in a person. When the life is departed, that function is not going to work. Why is it called pranayama and not shvasayama?

And then, in the popular package and in the worldly consumeristic yoga, they're only taught to deal with the breath. Handle the breath. Then that should be called shvasayama. The point is why it is called pranayama? So in educative process, we must be made aware of something that there's an aspect in us which esoteric physiology says, it is called pranamaya kosha. Like human anatomy, not in the view of exoteric anatomy, in esoteric anatomy, there are 5 koshas – annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya, anandamaya. Now these koshas are not known to modern anatomy. They will not speak about those things. They only speak about the corporeal body and the organs of the body, the constitution, the constitution of the corporeal body which is made up of body matter such as skin, flesh, muscles, tissues, cells, hard and soft cells, tissues – hard and soft tissues, and organs of the body for its systemic functioning. The pranamaya kosha is still not in the purview of modern science.

However, the ancient wisdom speaks about it. So it is, it becomes imperative that we must know what is pranamaya kosha to be getting some preliminary understanding of pranayama. Merely dealing with the breath is not going to become pranayama. Respiratory breathing is just going to work for respiratory organ, respiratory system. It is not going to work beyond. Therefore, it is imperative that, or in educative process, we are inducted to kosha concept. And we must know what is pranamaya kosha. So when we have some kind of introduction to pranamaya kosha, understanding of pranamaya kosha, even just information about pranamaya kosha, we can be devising, customising or inferring as to what is pranayama, why it is pranayama.

But if it we disregard pranamaya kosha, then why do we believe pranayama also then? So, it implies that you must know the pancha koshas. And it is important to have sufficient information at least about pranamaya kosha. All knowledge begins with information. Wherever the knowledge cannot begin with perception for tangible objects, it will begin with perceptions. But there are so many intangible aspects, so then we need to have informations. So at least there must be some information about pranamaya kosha. Otherwise there is no real way to

be going for pranayama in classical way in educative process. So to be knowing pranamaya kosha, you must know that there are 5 koshas.

There must, the first of the koshas is annamaya kosha. So we must know something about annamaya, because pranamaya kosha underlies annamaya kosha; it is permeated by pranamaya kosha. And then, therefore annamaya kosha is the first kosha that we need to know. Now in the simplest form, as a preliminary, very primary, I will give only primary information here. I cannot be giving in depth information here, since we have not at all come to annamaya kosha so far, or pancha koshas so far. So let me tell you what is this pranamaya kosha for us to understand. All that lives by food, thrives by food is maintained by food, is nurtured by food, grows by food is annamaya (kosha).

Even this temporal mind, empirical mind, cerebral mind, it is food generated. If you don't eat food then you will not have blood. If you don't have blood, there will be no blood supply to brain. If there is no blood supply to brain, will the brain function? So the brain functions because of the blood supply. And the blood supply means the blood is essence of all food. The blood is essence of all food that you have eaten. So it's not only that body matter is annamaya, even the mind matter is annamaya. It's not only that the body organs are annamaya, which are made up of skin, flesh, muscle, bones, tissues, fibres, that even the mind and mind organs are annamaya.

See, it must be known that we all have a handsome amount of memory. Now this memory is generated by a memory centre in the brain. There is memory mechanism in the brain. If that doesn't function, we'll not be having even the workable memory, business of life memory. So this memory is again all food. So if you, there is a wonderful story which comes in Upanishad, acharya makes a disciple fast, day after day, day after day, day after day, day after day. So he goes on fasting, complete fast for 15 days. And then slowly he loses even these normal faculty functions. And then slowly when the food is given, slowly the normal faculty functions start taking place, memory, recognition, perception, cognition. See many of you know you sometimes feel dizzy - why? Because there is low blood supply to brain for a while. What happens? You don't see although the eyes are open, you don't hear although the ears are open. You don't even stand, because when you feel dizzy, then you collapse. Now that there is no disease of your legs because of which you have collapsed. But there are normal faculty functions, because of which we stand and because of which we walk. So all that is from the brain and blood supply to brain, so it's all blood because of which we are carrying out normal activities, life activities of life, normal faculty functions of the brain and mind.

So, this blood supply – how important it is to the human embodiment - be that physical to mental, mental to physical – the blood supply is so important. The blood comes from what? From where? Blood comes from your food. And therefore, all this gross manifestation of body and mind, even our mind, is annamaya. Don't mistake. Because you will easily think that mind is manomaya. No. Not at all. Mind as well, this psychological mind, this empirical mind, this temporal mind, this cerebral mind is annamaya – because it thrives on food

which generates blood. And, gives the blood supply to whichever part of the body and brain. So that's why even this mind is annamaya. Memories are annamaya- Perception, cognition all that we have, it's a mental act, it's an intellectual act, it's an emotional act. But you will see that it depends on blood.

If the blood is not there, blood supply is cut, then what happens? If blood supply to brain is cut, so somebody is brain dead, what functions? Does the mind function? Because just the blood supply is cut to the brain, mind doesn't function. That means the mind depends on blood and the blood is a product, if not the final product, it's a product of food that we eat. And then that story in the Upanishad, when slowly the food is being administered, the person starts coming to life. It starts, is able to get up. Otherwise he was flat, not having eaten food for 15 days, he could not get up. And he was not even conscious, became unconscious. But when the food was administered, consciousness came. Then he started even carrying out body movements – he got up, then he started walking, and then various normal faculty functions came up, he started recognising. Perception, cognition all started functioning. They all depend on blood. All that depends on blood is annamaya. That's annamaya kosha. It's not only that physical body is annamaya. Body organs, mind organs, body functions, mind functions, body aspects, mind aspects, these are all annamaya, annamaya, annamaya!

Even this my intelligence is annamaya. If you don't give me food for 15-20 days and 1 month and no food at all, this won't happen. I won't be able to do this. Because that is the energy behind all that. So wherever the food is energy, intake of food is energy, the form of blood, because the food must be transformed into body matter, and then essence of it becomes blood. So that blood only is nothing but food. It's a mutation of food, a form of food. And therefore it's all annamaya.

So we're not just annamaya beings. There is pranamaya kosha. What is this pranamaya kosha? If you recall I had given some introductory information about adibhautik, adidaivik, adhyatmic aspects. Adhidaivik means the celestial aspects within us. So, within us we have heavens. We think all Gods reside in, preside in heavens. There is swarga – there is heaven - within us, where the Gods reside. Unless the Gods are within us, we are not functional human beings. So it is described in esoteric anatomy, physiology, that our fourteen organs have fourteen devatas, fourteen celestial forces which are presiding deities over all the fourteen organs. The five are the motor system, the five are the cognitive system, and four are the mind system. Karmendriyas which are five, jnanendriyas which are five and antarindriyas, manas endriyas, which are four - manas, buddhi, ahamkara, citta. So these are fourteen organs of mankind, human beings. And all these fourteen organs as I said during one of these sessions, I said, these have special functions. They have unique functions. No terrestrial thing will work like that. They are the celestial forces, therefore they have extraordinary abilities.

Your heart is function, will function, for 80, 90, 100 years. Which part of a car or a machine or an automobile, or any machine will work for so many years? So every organ is really unique organ. Our ears are not tape recorder, they're not

mechanical organ that ears are tape recorder. They do not just take a sound, they work so much on the mind as well. They work so much on the body as well. They work on the psyche and consciousness. With bad news, you collapse. With good news, perhaps the corpse will get onto the legs just hearing good news! So it's not just a tape recorder. Will you see ever a tape recorder dancing in ecstasy because it's recorded some celestial voice of a vocalist or top class musician; recorded somebody's, a maestro's music? You will not see the tape recorder jumping in ecstasy. Whether it is obnoxious sound, or very harsh sound, or sweet voice, it has no reactions. It just records. Our ears are not like that. Eyes are not cameras. Ears are not tape recorders. So you should not have mechanical view of the body. All these therefore, they're called indriyas, and I explained you sometime back, why they're called indriyas, not called organs. Not called avayava. They're called indriyas – Indra – the king of all Gods.

There are presiding deities in all our organs of the body, organs of the mind, organs of our system. Therefore they're really celestial organs. It's a wonder to see that the heart working for so many years incessantly. The lungs working incessantly for so many years of our lifespan. They have auto renewal process – they go on renewing themselves. Is there any machine that it goes on renewing itself?

But if you think mechanical, have a mechanical view of the body, liver as a mechanical organ, it won't renew itself. It could ask for replacement. Every two-three-four-five years. Which happens to every machine, that you have to replace the parts. But this is auto renewal takes place. That's why it is something very celestial.

So, the celestial forces are residing within us. A simple thing that suppose you want to go to a celestial body like moon, mars, you'll have to take your oxygen cylinder, otherwise you won't live. So you carry oxygen cylinder and go to moon, go to mars, or any celestial body; otherwise you can't be going there – you can't step your foot there, unless you have oxygen cylinder with you. So also with the heavenly celestial forces are coming and residing in our embodiment, they need their atmosphere. Like you will like to take, you will have to take earth atmosphere to go on to any such planet or any such celestial body, otherwise you won't be able to stay there too long, if you don't take earth atmosphere of the earth. So they have to have atmosphere within us, heavenly atmosphere. Therefore, in that microcosm view of the body, they say there is heaven in the body also, there's whole universe in the body, so, where is the question of heavens not there. Because heavens are part of the universe. So they have to have their atmosphere. And therefore there's a pranamaya kosha.

So whatever we eat and we speak and we do and we eat, it is , it is converted into prana. They create a pranic atmosphere for them. Like we need oxygen, they need prana. If there is no prana, they won't live. They will depart. Just as you won't live if you don't have oxygen. What is oxygen to us, the prana is for them. And as long as they are there, we are living. If they decide to depart, we have to leave the mortal coils. We can't say I will still stay. All the celestial forces departing, you can't stay. There's also wonderful story which comes in

Upanishads. Each organ departs – nothing happens to embodiment. Eyes go – the person becomes blind. Ears go, person becomes deaf, etc. So one by one, organs go on departing, it really doesn't hamper the existence. But the prana decides to leave, when the prana decides to leave, it starts uprooting everything. And therefore, the embodiment doesn't allow the prana to leave, leave the embodiment. They say you must not, you should not leave. Let the eyes leave, I have no problem. Let the ears leave, I have no problem. I still live. But when the prana decides to leave, the embodiment knows that it cannot live and it says don't leave, don't leave for me to live.

There's a beautiful description that comes in Upanishads. And that this pranamaya kosha is a kosha of all devatas who reside in us. If they don't reside, we are not even human beings. We are corpse. And that's why we are addressed as body.

So that's the pranamaya kosha. Now the pranamaya kosha is, as described by the science, is made up of 5 pranas – prana, apana, samana, udana, vyana. They are five pranas. And then shat chakras. So we must have some introductory information about these shat chakras because that is part of pranamaya kosha. So pranamaya kosha is composed of 6 plexii – muladhara, svadhishtana, manipuraka, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna. And of course the sahsraara, the seventh one. So, pranamaya kosha is made up of chakras, and pranamaya kosha is made up of five pranas: prana, apana, samana, vyana, udana. So we need some introductory information about the pancha pranas. We need to have some introductory information about pancha koshas to be going for pranayama in an educative process. In an educative process and purpose.

Now in consumer package you don't have to get educated. In consumerism, you don't have to be getting educated. Like today we can be using even the smart phones and laptops and computers without education. But what's the difference between one who is educated in software engineering, and one who is not educated but using. So in consumer world, like computers are being made for consumers to use it. But there is a big difference between a qualified person using it and an unqualified person using it.

So it's not just sufficient to be using computer and say that you are a software engineer. It will be ridiculous. So also about yoga it has happened – we are using all these things. Like any Tom, Dick and Harry uses a smart phone. One of the reasons why perhaps smart phone that those who are not smart should be, are using it. While those who are smart should be using it. While those who are not smart are using it. That's why it is smart phone. Similarly it has become to yoga. Any Tom, Dick or Harry uses smart phone, any Tom, Dick or Harry embarks upon yoga. That is not an educative process. You must get educated about it.

So pranamaya kosha, a little basic introductory information is a must about pranamaya kosha. And just now as I said definition for you that I can give you, and your hierarchy, is that it is made up five pranas. No body science will tell you about five pranas. It's only yoga will tell you about five pranas. Ancient wisdom has spoken about five pranas, prana, apana, samana, vyana, udana.

What are their functions? They have different functions. They're all over the embodiment, the whole embodiment is conducted by pranas. That's why when the prana departs, it is death. So vital is prana to our existence. And then the prana has its locus in pranamaya kosha. Pranamaya kosha is made up of shat chakras and pancha pranas.

So little basic introduction, introductory knowledge about it is imperative. So I told you about annamaya kosha, which is food generated body and mind. It is with the food, it is not only the body grows – the mind also grows. The food to baby is given, nourishment to baby is given, not only to have the body growing, but even the mind growing. So food works for both body and mind. What aspect of mind - it can be easily understood – the cerebral mind, temporal mind, empirical mind which is brain generated mind. That is annamaya kosha. And the pranamaya kosha. So, little introduction to these koshas is necessary. I've just given a brief, brief introduction to pranamaya kosha which is a part of human embodiment. Then let's try to understand how pranayama is, what is prana. We have not still gone into it. So that is for next time.

Enough for the day. Namaste!