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Importance of Prana and its types in yoga

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to lighten the knowledge of Prana and its types, so that the people who are interested in the field of yoga can enhance their knowledge about the concept and relation of Prana with Breath, Spiritual aspects of Prana and working on Prana. Prana, literally the “forward moving air,” moves inward governs reception of all types from the eating of food, drinking of water, and inhalation of air, to the reception of sensory impressions and mental experiences. Apana, literally the “air that moves away,” moves downward and outward and governs all forms of elimination and reproduction (which also has a downward movement). Udana, literally the “upward moving air”, moves upward and qualitative or transformative movements of the life-energy. Samana, literally the “balancing air,” moves from the periphery to the center, through a churning and discerning action. It aids in digestion on all levels. Vyana, literally the “outward moving air,” moves from the center to the periphery. It governs circulation on all level. The five Pranas are energies and processes that occur on several levels. However we can localize them in a few key ways. Prana Vayu governs the movement of energy from the head down to the navel, which is the Pranic center in the physical body. Apana Vayu governs the movement of energy from the navel down to the root chakra. Samana Vayu the movement of energy from the entire body to the navel. Vyana Vayu governs the movement of energy out from the navel throughout the entire body. Udana governs the movement of energy from the navel up to the head.

Keywords: Spiritual, sensory, breath, periphery, navel

Introduction

The Five Pranas

Pranaya kosha is composed of the five Pranas. The one primary Prana divides into five types according to its movement and direction. This is an important subject in Ayurvedic medicine as well as Yogic thought.

Prana

Prana, literally the “forward moving air,” moves inward governs reception of all types from the eating of food, drinking of water, and inhalation of air, to the reception of sensory impressions and mental experiences. It is propulsive in nature, setting things in motion guiding them. It provides the basic energy that drives us in life.

Apana

Apana, literally the “air that moves away,” moves downward and outward and governs all forms of elimination and reproduction (which also has a downward movement). It governs the elimination of the stool and the urine, the expelling of semen, menstrual fluid and fetus, and the elimination of carbon dioxide through the breath. On a deeper level it rules the elimination of negative sensory, emotional mental experiences. It is the basis of our immune function on all levels.

Udana

Udana, literally the “upward moving air”, moves upward and qualitative or transformative movements of the life-energy. It governs growth of the body, the ability to stand, speech, effort, enthusiasm and will. It is our positive energy in life through which we can develop our different bodies and evolve in consciousness.

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Samana

Samana, literally the “balancing air,” moves from the periphery to the center, through a churning and discerning action. It aids in digestion on all levels. It works in the gastrointestinal tract to digest food, in the lungs to digest air or absorb oxygen, and in the mind to homogenize and digest experiences, whether sensory, emotional or mental.

Vyana

Vyana, literally the “outward moving air,” moves from the center to the periphery. It governs circulation on all level. It moves the food, water and oxygen throughout the body, and keeps our emotions and thoughts circulating in the mind, imparting movement and providing strength. In doing so it assists all the other Pranas in their work.

The five Pranas are energies and processes that occur on several levels. However we can localize them in a few key ways. Prana Vayu governs the movement of energy from the head down to the navel, which is the Pranic center in the physical body. Apana Vayu governs the movement of energy from the navel down to the root chakra. Samana Vayu the movement of energy from the entire body to the navel. Vyana Vayu governs the movement of energy out from the navel throughout ht entire body. Udana governs the movement of energy from the navel up to the head.

As a simple summary we could say that Prana governs the intake of substance. Samana governs their digestion. Vyana governs the circulation of nutrients. Udana governs the release of positives energy. Apana governs the elimination of waste-materials. This is much like the working of a machine. Prana brings in the fuel, Samana converts this to energy, Vyana circulates the energy to the various work sites. Apana released the waste materials or by products of the conversion process. Udana governs the positive energy created in the process.

The key to health and well-being is to keep our Pranas in harmony. When one Prana becomes imbalanced, the others tend to become imbalanced as well because they are all linked together. Generally Prana and Udana work opposite to Apana as the forces of energization versus those of elimination. Similarly Vyana and Samana are opposite as expansion and contraction.

Prana and the Breath

Breathing is the main form of Pranic activity in body. Prana governs inhalation. Samana governs absorption of oxygen that occurs mainly during retention of the breath. Vyana governs its circulation. Apana governs exhalation and the release of carbon dioxide. Udana governs exhalation and the release of positive energy through the breath, including speech that occurs via the outgoing breath.

Prana and the Mind

The mind also has its energy and prana. This derives from food, breath and impressions externally. Prana governs the intake of sensory impressions. Samana governs mental digestion. Vyana governs mental circulation/ Apana governs the elimination of toxic ideas and negative emotions. Udana governs positives mental energy, strength and enthusiasm.

On a psychological level, Prana governs our receptivity to positive sources of nourishment, feeling and knowledge through the mind and senses. When deranges it cause wrong desirer and insatiable craving. We become misguided, misdirected and generally out of balance

Apana on a psychological level governs our ability to

eliminate negative thoughts and emotions. When deranged it caused depression and we get clogged up with undigested experience that weighs us down in life, making us fearful, suppressed and weak.

Samana Vayu gives us nourishment, contentment and balance in the mind. When deranged it brings about attachment and greed. We cling to things and become possessive in our behavior.

Vyana Vayu gives us free movement and independence in the mind. When deranged it causes isolation, hatred, and alienation. We are unable to unite with others or remain connected in what we do. Udana gives us joy and enthusiasm and helps awaken our higher spiritual and creative potentials. When deranged it causes pride and arrogance. We become ungrounded, trying to go to high and lose track of our roots.

Spiritual Aspect of the Pranas

The Pranas have many special actions in Yogic practices. On a spiritual level, Samana Vayu governs the space within the heart (antar hridayakasha) in which the true self, the Atman dwells as a fire with seven flames, govern the central internal space or antariksha. Samanas regulates Agni with fuel, which must burn evenly. Without the peace and balanced of Samana we cannot return to the core of our being or concentrate the mind. Vyana governs the movement of Prana through the Nadis, keeping them open, clear, clean and even in their functioning. Apana protects us from negative astral influences and false teachers. Prana itself gives us the proper aspiration for our spiritual development. Udana governs our growth in consciousness and takes the mind into the state of sleep and into the after death realms. Udana also governs the movement up the shushumna. The mind moves with udana Vayu. This takes us to the states of dream and deep sleep. After death it leads the soul to the astral and causal planes.

As we practice Yoga the subtle aspects of these Pranas begin to awaken. This may cause various unusual movements of energy in body and mind, including the occurrence of various spontaneous movements or kriyas. We may feel new expanses of energy (subtle Vyana), great peace (subtle Samana), a sense of lightness or levitation (subtle Udana), deep groundedness and stability (subtle Apana), or just heightened vitality and sensitivity (subtle Prana).

Working on Prana

Proper nutrition brings about the increase of Prana on a physical level. This also requires proper elimination. In ayurvedic thought the Prana from the food is absorbed in the large intestine, particularly in the upper two-thirds of this organ, which is not simply an organ of elimination. For this reason Apana Vayu is the most important Prana for physical health.

The Vedas say that mortals eat food with Apana, while the Gods eat food with Prana. The mortals are the physical tissues. The immortals are the senses. These take in food via Prana itself. Right food sustains Apana. Right like contact with nature, but also practices like rituals and visualizations are important, as well as sensory therapies involving color, sounds or aromas.

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