

ISSN: 2456-4419

Impact Factor: (RJIF): 5.18

Yoga 2018; 3(2): 770-774

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www.theyogicjournal.com

Received: 04-05-2018

Accepted: 05-06-2018

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Throat friction meditation technique for attaining Shiva consciousness

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Abstract

A not-so-well-known meditation technique and hence, not practiced by a majority of meditators, has been discussed in this paper. It is called 'Throat friction meditation'. Its approximate equivalent in Hinduism is the *Bhramari* meditation. *Bhramari* is known as the goddess of bees and hence the sound during this type of meditation resembles those of bees. It is basically a meditation for purification and balancing the throat chakra (*Vishuddhi chakra*). After a prolonged practice of throat-chakra meditation, the focus can then be shifted to the third eye (*ajna chakra*), which helps the seeker to accrue many physical, mental and psychological benefits and finally in the pilgrimage to Shiva consciousness. The throat friction technique is also equivalent to 'Tuvan throat singing' in which the singers produce friction-like voice through their throats. It is also similar to 'mmm' meditation, which leads to mental peace, relaxation, happiness and bliss. These aspects are discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Throat friction, meditation, *Bhramari*, Tuvan singing, third eye, Shiva, consciousness

Introduction

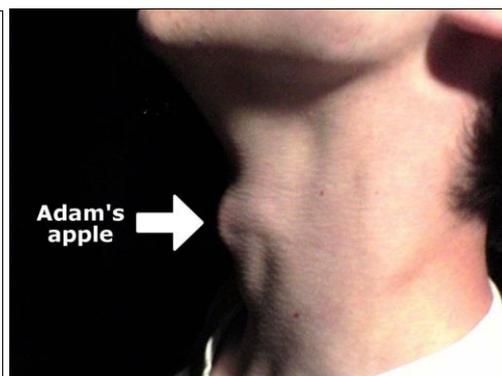
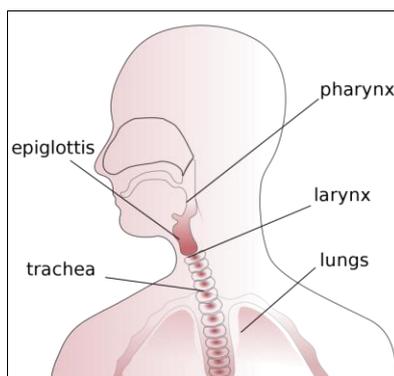
In this paper we are going to discuss a not-so-well-known 'Throat friction meditation' for attaining the Shiva consciousness.

What is Throat Friction Meditation?

The 'throat-friction meditation' consists of breathing with a friction at the lower part of the back of the throat (larynx), while keeping the mouth slightly open [1]. The friction is generated during both inhalation and exhalation. The sound is roughly the same while inhaling and exhaling. The sound is just like that of humming of honeybee. If you can, try to make it a low-pitched sound; it will be easier to sustain over long periods of time.

What is larynx and where is it located in the human body?

It is part of the respiratory system and is located between the pharynx and the trachea. Humans use the larynx to breathe, talk, and swallow. Its outer wall of cartilage forms the area of the front of the neck referred to as the 'Adam's apple'. The vocal cords, two bands of muscle, form a V inside the larynx. The vocal folds are located within the larynx at the top of the trachea.



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An Interesting mythological story about Neelakantha (Lord Shiva)

Before we discuss further about the “Throat Friction meditation” let us narrate a mythological story from the Puranas, including ‘*Shiva Purana*’ [2]:

The Devas (gods) and Asuras (demons) decided to churn the deep waters of the ocean in order to raise its treasures to the surface. For this purpose they used the mountain, Mandakini, as the stirring stick and the earth snake, Vasuki, as the rope. The gods took hold of the tail of the snake and the Asuras held its head. A variety of treasures appeared from the ocean floor. At first appeared the goddess Lakshmi, and then finally Amrita, the nectar of immortality, rose to the surface in a golden vessel. But with this nectar also came a deadly poison. The gods and the demons were helpless, as the poison was potent enough to destroy the whole Universe and they were unable to render it harmless. In desperation they appealed to Lord Shiva for help. Shiva drank the poison without swallowing it, but stored it in the Vishuddhi Chakra with his Yoga power. There he purified it through the means of *Bhramari pranayama* (Throat Friction meditation). In this way he saved and liberated the world from this deadly danger. As a result his throat was forever coloured dark blue and since then Shiva also has the name Neelakantha (blue throat).

Mythological Story of Bhramari Devi

This story of Mahadevi Bhagavati in her Bhramari form is well documented in the form of 127 verses of the 13th chapter of the 10th skandha of the Devi Bhagavata Purana, as stated by Sri Narayana to Sage Narada, retold by Sage Vyasa to king Janmejaya, the great-grandson of Arjuna.

Bhramari is a Hindu Goddess. She is an incarnation of the Goddess Shakti. Bhramari means ‘the Goddess of bees’ or ‘the Goddess of black bees’. She is associated with bees, hornets and wasps, which cling to her body. She is typically depicted as holding a mace, trident, sword and shield in her four hands. The tenth book and thirteenth chapter of the Devi Bhagavata Purana records the exploit of the goddess Bhramari in detail. She is also briefly alluded to in the Devi Mahatmya. The Devi Bhagavata Purana describes how she slew the demon Arunasura.

In the city of the demons, there lived a powerful demon named Arunasura. He was a furious God-hater and a hypocrite, who wanted to conquer the Gods. He went to the banks of the Ganges in the Himalayas and practiced a very strict penance to Brahma, who believed him to be the protector of the demons. He held in his body the five vāyus of Prana and began meditating, repeating the Gayatri Mantra and practicing austerities. For the first ten thousand years, he lived by ingesting only dry leaves; for the second, he lived by drinking only drops of water; and, for the third, he lived by inhaling air alone. For the fourth ten thousand years, he did not consume anything and thus practiced his penance. After the fourth ten thousand years, his belly had become dried up, his body had withered and the nerves of his body had become almost visible; only the life breath was lingering there. At this point a halo of light emitted from his body and began to burn the whole world. With his eyes closed, he appeared to be blazing with fire, as if he were a fire himself. Observing his penance and resolve, Lord Brahma saw fit to bless Arunasura with protection from all two- or four-legged creatures.

The demon used the power of his penances to assume various forms and seized possession of the Moon, the Sun, Yamraj, Agni and all the others. All the Gods, dislodged from their stations, then went to the region of Kailash and presented to

Lord Shiva the dire nature of their situation. After conferring with Shiva, they turned to Parvati, the complete incarnation of the Adi Parashakti. Parvati was aware of Arunasura's blessing, and devised a plan to kill the demon with the help of six-legged creatures.

After taking control of all the celestial regions, Arunasura's next intention was to attack kailash directly. Shiva and his sons confronted him at the foot of the mountain. They tried to defeat him but were unsuccessful. Shiva then called upon Parvati in the battlefield. Parvati closed her eyes in concentration, summoning forth countless bees, hornets, wasps, flies, termites, mosquitoes and spiders from the skies. They crawled onto her body and clung onto her, merging with her to create the divine form of Bhramari Devi.

In the battle that ensued, the demons' swords were blocked by Bhramari Devi's shield, while her other arms inflicted damage on the massive army. Parvati (now in guise of Bhramari Devi) ran through the ranks, stabbing with the trident. The bees, hornets, wasps, flies, termites, mosquitoes and spiders which clung to her emanated forth in a wave over the ranks. When Arunasura was the last demon remaining on battlefield, Bhramari Devi sent all of the insects to attack him. They crawled all over him and ripped open each part of his body: his breasts, chest, back and belly, arms, hands, fingers, legs, feet and toes were all torn apart. Soon after seeing Arunasura's great fall, the insects returned to Bhramari Devi and clung on her again.

Techniques for Throat Friction Meditation

Vishuddhi chakra (the fifth chakra in our system) energizes our creative ability in communication and expression, like speaking, singing and writing. Translated from Sanskrit, Vishuddhi means ‘purifying impurities’. This chakra is located at the throat. The Bija Mantra for this chakra is ‘Hum’ (just like humming of bees). Its frequencies in Hz are: 196 (fundamental), 392 (2nd harmonic), 784 (4th harmonic), 1568 (8th harmonic), 3136 (16th harmonic) etc. Thoughtful speech, filled with kindness, wisdom and truth is what a well-tuned Vishuddhi chakra will bring about. Its deficiency in purity causes neck stiffness, teeth grinding, throat ailments, underactive thyroid, fear of speaking. Its excess causes excessive talking and not listening, also hearing difficulties.

The pranayama that best suits the balancing of this chakra is the Bhramari breath or the humming bee breath-practice that fits Vishuddhi beautifully. During this practice our focus is on the throat friction, which happens at the location of Vishuddhi. Throat-Friction Breathing or *Bhramari pranayama* (bee breathing) is a good practice for Vishuddhi chakra, the throat chakra [3]. The practice is centered on releasing the neck, jaw and shoulder muscles. As most of us have a tendency to hold subconscious tension in these areas, one really enjoys the effects of this yoga practice. It activates the voice box and engages both speech and hearing (the active and cognitive senses associated with this chakra). In *Bhramari*, a bee-like humming sound is directed inward and upward toward the head. It makes the mind inward and is a very effective technique for meditation.

One way of practicing this exercise is to make your humming sound resemble the buzzing of a bee. Then the practice becomes the bhrāmarin technique of Hatha-yoga. If this proves difficult, don't worry. Bees, who are great experts in humming/buzzing sounds, are highly alchemical little creatures. They take the nectar from the reproductive parts of plants and turn it into honey. Honey is a remarkable substance in many ways. It keeps for years without any preservation

process – a very long time, especially if you compare it to the lifespan of a worker-bee, which is about one or two months. So the bees take a sexually-related product and turn it into a non-perishable substance. Honey, interestingly enough, has always been considered an excellent remedy for the throat, and bees a symbol of eloquence.

Just breathe with some vague friction in the throat and everything will be fine! It does not matter whether you are breathing through the nose or the mouth, or both at the same time, but the mouth should remain slightly open. In this position the lower jaw is loose and relaxed which generates a certain condition of energy and can be enough in itself to induce a slightly altered state of consciousness. The correct friction comes from the larynx and the lower pharynx, meaning the lower part of the back of the throat.

Its depth and rhythm should be as normal. Slightly deeper breathing may be implemented in the beginning, in order to generate a clearer friction. But you do not need to hyperventilate: this technique does not aim at creating the type of breathing used in rebirthing. The purpose of the throat friction is to reinforce your connection with the ‘energy’, a term that may sound vague in the beginning but will become more and more meaningful as you keep working on your third eye. As you become more accustomed to this friction practice, you will only have to tune into the flow of energy around you and the right intensity of the breath will follow automatically. Depth and rhythm will vary, for it is the nature of energy to vary, and it is our purpose to learn to flow with the energy.

The energetic action of this friction breathing will be greatly enhanced if your neck is straight and vertical, in line with the rest of the spine. The more perfectly upright your neck is, the more power is released in the larynx. The mouth is only slightly open, but still it is important to make sure that it remains open, and more precisely that the lower jaw is relaxed so that the upper and lower teeth do not meet. Note also that this slightly open position of the mouth is not taken to force you to breathe through the mouth instead of the nose. Breathe through the nose, the mouth or both at the same time, as feels most natural to you.

Instead of placing your awareness in the larynx, now become aware of the ‘third eye’ on the spot between your eyebrows. This technique can be quite intoxicating. If practised long enough, it induces a slightly exhilarating altered state of consciousness. The effect is strongly reinforced by being aware in the third eye at the same time.

Following are some other techniques of Throat-friction meditation:

Basic Throat-friction (Bhramari) Meditation

Sit comfortably and allow your eyes to close. Take a breath or two to settle in and notice the state of your mind. When you’re ready, inhale and then, for the entire length of your exhalation, make a low- to medium-pitched humming sound in the throat. Notice how the sound waves gently vibrate your tongue, teeth, and sinuses. Imagine the sound is vibrating your entire brain (it really is). Do this practice for six rounds of breath and then, keeping your eyes closed, return to your normal breathing. Notice if anything has changed.

Silent Throat-friction (Bhramari) Meditation

Once again, settle in for a breath or two to prepare. Now do six more cycles of basic Bhramari. After your sixth round, switch to silent Bhramari, in which you imagine making the buzzing sound on each exhalation. Do for six rounds. Notice whether you can still sense vibrations in your face and sinuses.

Bhramari with Shanmukhi Mudra (Variation)

One way to intensify the effects of Bhramari is to add shanmukhi mudra. Bhramari encourages pratyahara, the turning of the senses inward, so by blocking some of the external input to the senses with your fingers, you can heighten the effect. Try a simplified version first. Use your thumbs to push on the tragus of each ear—the bump of cartilage on the cheek side—to block the ear canal. Practice low- to medium-pitched Bhramari for six rounds of breath. When you’re finished, lower your hands and breathe normally.

Bhramari with Shanmukhi Mudra (Traditional)

Sit up straight and place your hands on your face with one thumb on each tragus, the index fingers lightly touching the inner corners of your eyes, the middle fingers on the sides of the nose, the ring fingers above the lips, and the pinkies just below. Be sure to place only very light pressure on the eyeballs. Do six more rounds of low- to medium-pitched Bhramari, lower your hands, and notice the effects.

High-Pitched Bhramari

Once you have reestablished a relaxed sitting position, close your eyes and take a few normal breaths. Now do six rounds of high-pitched Bhramari, with or without shanmukhi mudra. Notice where you feel the vibration; most likely you will experience the vibration higher in the head than you did with the lower-pitched sound. Does the higher-pitched sound feel more stimulating? Experiment with different tones and different volumes and compare the results.

Benefits of Throat-Friction /Bhramari Meditation

- Bhramari meditation, or honeybee breathing, is one of the few yogic practices that connect breath, sound, and posture. It closes off the senses while the buzzing “mmmm” sound of a bee is made with each exhalation. The sound waves gently vibrate the vocal chords, teeth, lips, and even the brain, reverberating energy around the third eye chakra (ajna). This balances the nervous system and produces immediate feelings of mental clarity, making honeybee breathing a powerful meditation practice.
- Throat-friction meditation reduces anxiety, relieves stress, directs awareness inward, soothes the nervous system, draws energy to the third eye chakra, strengthens prana (life force energy) in the heart and brain, quiets the mind, strengthens the voice, brings mental clarity, and purifies the ida and pinagala nadis (subtle energy channels).
- A quiet, low-pitched sound, perhaps with the addition of shanmukhi mudra, could be soothing to the nervous system and mind. A more forceful medium- to high-pitched sound might be a better choice to open the passageways. Use the silent variation, at work or in public, so no one around you knows what you are doing.
- Throat-friction (Bhramari) meditation, a safe, easy-to-learn practice, has tremendous therapeutic potential. Like other Pranayamas, its power comes partly from its effects on the autonomic nervous system (ANS). Lengthening the exhalation relative to the inhalation activates the calming parasympathetic branch of the ANS. For those who suffer from anxiety or anxious (rajasic) depression, the practice can begin to quiet the mind within a few breaths. The noise of Bhramari’s incessant buzzing can drown out the endless mental tape loops that can fuel

emotional suffering, at least for a few minutes, making it a useful starting point for those whose minds are too “busy” to meditate. With regular practice of throat-friction meditation, bliss arises in the heart. It can also relieve insomnia, sinus infections, thyroid problems, and stress [4].

- According to one study [5] it was noted that Bhramari meditation increases paroxysmal EEG waves immediately after practice in the healthy volunteers. During this practice all the subjects exhibited high frequency hyperphasic patterns, biphasic waves. They found strong amplitude-gamma waves after 30 days of Bhramari meditation practice (two sessions per day). It was further concluded that continuous practice would cause the waves to remain for several minutes even after the practice is finished.
- In the Vedic tradition, sound vibration is known as Nada. In the practice of Nada Yoga, sound is used not only to restore physical and mental well-being but also as a path to spiritual awakening. Nada Yoga divides sound into two categories: Ahata (external sounds) and internal sounds, Anahata. Internal sounds are perceived through the Anahata (heart) chakra. Each human body has its own unique sound or vibration, which is sacred to that individual. By regulating the breath, with the attention turned inwards, and closing the ears with the fingers, you can begin to listen in on your own inner sound. Re-aligning with this sound serves to balance your energetic body and ultimately re-connect you with your divine presence. With practice, you can also learn to hear the vibration of the universe, a soft distant OM, sometimes referred to as the Cosmic Hum. Through Nada Yoga it is said that you can remove all impurities in the physiology. It starts with awakening the inner fire through the use of Throat-friction or Bhramari meditation (humming bee breath).
- This meditation technique helps reduce anger, anxiety, mental agitation, promotes, relaxation and calm, and can bring you as close as possible to a meditative state of mind. Studies have shown that Bhramari Pranayam relaxes the cerebral cortex and activates the parasympathetic system that is responsible for calmness, relaxation and promotes sound deep sleep.
- It stimulates the balanced secretion of hormones by the endocrine glands. The vibrations produced by the nasal bumblebee like tone when chanting Mmmm sound during Bhramari stimulates the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus is a small pea sized part of the brain which helps maintain homeostasis. It forms a link between the nervous system and the endocrine glands by releasing hormones that stimulate the pituitary gland to either secrete or inhibit the secretion of hormones by the endocrine glands in our body. Together the anterior and posterior pituitary gland secrete hormones that control the production of the growth hormone, thyroid stimulating hormone, adrenocorticotrophic hormone, lutenizing hormone, follicle stimulating hormone, prolactin, vasopressin, oxytocin and the neurotransmitter dopamine.
- Corticotropin (CRH) releasing hormone is secreted by the hypothalamus in response to stress. Higher CRH is associated with Alzheimer’s and depression. It stimulates the production of pituitary adreno-cortico tropic hormone (ACTH) which is produced in response to biological stress and results in increased production and release of cortisol by the adrenal gland. Increased cortisol has

negative effects on the immune system, lengthens wound healing time, and leads to osteoporosis by reducing bone formation [6].

- Dopamine (a neurohormone released by the hypothalamus) has an influence on the motor control centers. A loss of dopamine is associated with Parkinson’s disease and pain associated with Parkinson’s. Imbalance in dopamine levels has found to be associated with social anxiety, apathy, schizophrenia etc.
- The nasal tone humming/buzzing Mmmm sound during slow nasal exhalation boosts production of nitric oxide. Nitric oxide dilates arteries, improving blood circulation and oxygen to the heart, decreases plaque growth (which causes atherosclerosis) and blood clotting, lowers high blood pressure. Nitric oxide is produced naturally in our tissues and sinuses when we breathe through our nostrils, but if we breathe through our mouth we cannot utilize this nitric oxide.

‘Throat friction meditation’ is equivalent to ‘Tuvan throat singing’

‘Throat friction meditation’ is also equivalent to ‘Tuvan throat singing’, which is a healing meditation. Tuvan throat singing is one particular variant of overtone singing practiced by people in Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, Tuvan and Siberia. In 2009, it was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO, under the name Mongolian art of singing, Khoomei. It creates otherworldly harmonic overtones over a droning vocalization [7].

Tuvan throat singing is one particular variant of overtone singing practiced by people in Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, Tuvan and Siberia. In 2009, it was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO, under the name Mongolian art of singing, Khoomei.

The people of Tuvan have a wide range of throat singing vocalizations, and were the pioneers of six pitch harmonics. There are several different classification schemes for Tuvan throat singing. In one, the four basic styles are Khorekteer, khoomei, sygyt, and kargyraa [8].

- Khorekteer: A higher pitched raspy vocalization often used in Tuvan music while singing lyrics;
- Khoomei: A deep and low expression with powerful wailing overtones;
- Sygyt: A high-pitched ethereal whistle sounding meant to symbolize the union of Heaven and Earth;
- Kargyraa: An extremely deep, almost growling and guttural vocalization that can produce beautiful overtones.

In Mongolian throat singing, the performer produces a fundamental pitch and—simultaneously—one or more pitches over that [9]. The history of Mongolian throat singing reaches far back. Many male herders can throat sing, but women are beginning to practice the technique as well. The popularity of throat singing among Mongolians seems to have arisen as a result of geographic location and culture. The open landscape of Mongolia allows for the sounds to carry a great distance.

The animistic world view of this region identifies the spirituality of objects in nature, not just in their shape or location, but in their sound as well. Thus, human mimicry of nature's sounds is seen as the root of throat singing. An example of this is the Mongolian story of the waterfall above the Buoyant Göl (Deer River in Tuvan), where mysterious

harmonic sounds are said to have attracted deer to bask in the waters, and where it is said harmonic sounds were first revealed to people. Indeed, the cultures in this part of Asia have developed many instruments and techniques to mimic the sounds of animals, wind, and water. While the cultures of this region share throat singing, their styles vary in breadth of development.

By constricting the larynx, the vestibular folds can be brought together (adducted) and, under certain conditions, vibrate. It can produce an undertone exactly half the frequency of the fundamental produced by the vocal folds. Therefore, for each second vibration of the vocal folds, the vestibular fold completes a whole vibration cycle. While the larynx generates such rich sound, the mouth cavity may be shaped, just like in the manipulation of vowels, to select some particular harmonics, resulting in a sound that may be perceived as having different pitches simultaneously.

‘MMM’ Mantra is Equivalent to ‘Throat Fiction Mantra’

As is known that our Neo-Cortex, which a part of the brain is, controls our higher order functions, planning, reasoning, judgment, impulses, memory, and motor functions. In fact, much of our brain function happens in this area of the brain – the frontal lobe, the parietal lobe, the temporal lobe and the occipital lobe; whereas the midbrain is vitally important to maintaining and regulating the state of consciousness, alertness and attention. The midbrain contains the physical pineal gland, which has similar features to the retina in our eyes and is also a replica of what Siddhas call the third eye. The Midbrain includes the Pons, reticular activating system, the pituitary gland, and the 3rd ventricle. The pineal gland and the surrounding area in the midbrain is where our connection to higher thought and reality is. When these areas are activated we open ourselves up to the extraordinary and welcome events that begin to manifest in our lives ^[10].

The Midbrain overwrites logical brain. If you have difficulty believing that; command your hand to go into the fire and see how other parts of the brain will overwrite that action. If your midbrain is more active, your logical brain, your mind-blabla will decrease and ultimately stop overtime. If you want the miracles the "Third Eye" can bring you; you need to heal your 3rd eye and the higher emotional energy body that is attached to it first. After you have cleaned it, you need to energize it continuously; the more energy is within the Third Eye, the more miracles you can manifest ^[11].

We take a deeper look at the MMM Mantra for 3rd eye activation; Dr. Pillai showed with scientific research that the MMM Mantra activates the midbrain (EEG Scan). In a study The Audio Spectrum Analysis shows ^[12] that a recording of the MMM mantra is blue, to be correct, dark blue when pitched to the 288Hz that Tibetan Singing Bowls for the 3rd Eye are attuned to. It is no coincidence that the two show similarity in colour as it is a common Vedic knowledge that the 3rd Eye and the "higher emotional body" a.k.a. the Aura that is attached to the 3rd eye chakra are dark blue. When you sing, chant or listen the word MMM in the right pitch, you are ejecting fresh dark blue energy into your aura with the audio vibrations, specifically into the higher emotional energy body where the Third Eye is attached to. By doing this you provide the 3rd eye with fresh and new energy to "do its thing naturally".

Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed a not-so-well-known type of meditation, that is, the Throat-Friction or Bhramari meditation

for achieving various benefits. Throat friction meditation is basically used for purification and removing the blockages in the throat chakra (*Vishuddhi chakra*). It is also called Bhramari meditation, with sounds like those of honey bees. Various meditation techniques, based on Bhramari, have been discussed in this paper. Finally it has been argued that this type of meditation accrues many benefits to the seeker including a pilgrimage to Shiva consciousness. The throat friction technique is also equivalent to ‘Tuvan throat singing’ in which the singers produce friction-like voice through their throats. It is also similar to ‘mmm’ meditation, which leads to mental peace, relaxation, happiness and bliss. These aspects have been discussed in this paper.

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