



GITANANDA YOGA

NEWSLETTER

DOWN UNDER

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NAMASTE!



*Welcome to another vibrant Newsletter
of the Gitananda Yoga Association of Australia Inc.*

The wheel of time just keeps spinning around and we find ourselves already half-way through the calendar year.

As our patron Ambassador in Australia, Dr Swami Anandakapila Saraswati, has written in his 'A Chakra & Kundalini Workbook', 'Killing time isn't murder – it's spiritual suicide!'

As long as we spend our time in concerted actions in the world based on the highest path (which unfortunately often implies the hardest) for all concerned, living our values to the best of our abilities then we are doing well and spending our time on this blessed planet the most effective way for our spiritual unfolding.

This is what truly counts and Swami Gitananda Giri Maharaj was an example. From various accounts, he exuded a vibrancy, a holistic joie de vivre, the fire of the Divine. No dullness, no dreariness.

Swami Gitananda has gifted us with the legacy of the Rishis (of which he is one) through his teachings. It is the responsibility of the Acharyas of the Paramparai to hold the torch for deserving students. And to this rank is now added another member in Australia, a newly initiated Acharini, one baked at Ananda Ashram over the six months intensive teacher training, Yogacharini Wendy Snape. Congratulations sister and god/dess speed! Hold on to your armchair as the true test now lies in daily life.

The theme for this quarter is Pranayama. Swami Gitananda taught no less than 120 different Pranayamas and held this anga or limb of the Yoga hierarchy to the level of importance it deserves. One will attest that 2 hours a day is spent at Ananda Ashram practicing Pranayama. Consider it the bellows that fuel the internal fire activating the transmutation

or transformation of the neophyte, burning away dross, an important element in the baking of the Saddhak into an initiate. So please take the time to read about the various experiences and insights of the Gitananda Yoga Acharyas and Saddhaks who have written an article on this most important of subjects, Pranayama or control of the life-force through the conscious use of the breathing mechanism.

As Amma writes in her correspondences, may our Sadhana be Sattwic, Sahaja and Sukham.

With regard to our insurance provider, OAMPS, we have some good news to share with everyone which really further reinforces the benefit of joining if you have not already done so. OAMPS has formed a new partnership, with a leading liability Insurer, giving us more flexibility in covering different modalities, as well as improved claims handling.

OAMPS will be contacting our members Insured with them, advising of these benefits.



*Yours in Yoga
The Editor*

PRANAYAMA

☺ THERAPEUTIC ASPECTS OF PRANAYAMA

INTRODUCTION

Prana is the vital life force that acts as a catalyst in all our activities and Ayama the expansion or control of this force. Thus Pranayama can be defined as the science of controlled, conscious expansion of Prana in our energy body/sheath, the Pranamaya Kosha. Gurus of Vedic times placed great importance on Pranayama and advocated its practice in order to unleash the hidden potential energy



known as the Kundalini Shakti. Indian culture has always laid great emphasis on Prana and Pranayama and ancient texts say, "God is breath" as well as "Breath is life and life is breath". Atarva Veda even states, "Prana is the fundamental basis of whatever is, was and will be". In the Prasnopanishad we can find the following statement. "All that exists in all the three worlds is under the governance of Prana". It is said in the Shiva-Svarodaya, "The Prana (life force) verily is one's greatest friend, companion and there is no greater kinsman than the life force". In the Yoga-Vashistha, Sage Vashistha says that when the energy of the life force (Prana) is restricted, then the mind dissolves, like a shadow of a thing when the thing is absent.

The systematic practice of Yoga as codified by Maharishi Patanjali places Pranayama as the fourth limb or Anga of Ashtanga Yoga. He puts it above the Yama-Niyama and Asana and says that one must practice the Yama-Niyama and try to master Asana in order to be able to practice Pranayama. He defines Pranayama as 'The regulation of the movements of inhalation and exhalation'. He also states that by the practice of Pranayama, the darkness that hides the light of wisdom is destroyed. He goes on to advise us that our mind attains fitness for the Samyama practices (of Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi) through perfection in Pranayama. Patanjali has said that Pranayama is regulated by place, time and number meaning that at various times in our Yoga Sadhana, different Pranayamas are required to be practiced in order to attain the ultimate spiritual goal of Moksha. Rishi Gheranda devotes an entire chapter (fifth) out of seven to the discussion of Pranayama in his Gheranda Samhita. Gheranda advocates that Pranayama Sadhana be begun either in Vasanta (spring) or Sarat (autumn) to achieve success. He stresses moderation in diet for Pranayama Sadhana and says "Half the stomach should be filled with food, one quarter with water and the other quarter left empty for practice of Pranayama". Rishi Gheranda also advises that Pranayama should be practised facing either East or North and that the Nadis must be purified by either Samanu (using the Bija Mantras) or Nirmanu (using Shat Karmas) methods before Pranayama. Maharishi Gheranda lists the following eight Kumbhakas (Pranayamas) as important in Pranayama Sadhana: Sahita, Surya Bhedana, Ujjayi, Sitali, Bhastrika, Brahmari, Murccha and Kevali Kumbhaka. In the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Swatmarama says,

'Disturbed breath leads to a disturbed mind, hence, cultivate a steady and quiet breath in order to control the mind and prolong the life'. He also says "The Lord of the senses is the mind, the Lord of the mind is the breath; the master of breath is the nervous system; quietness of the nerves and concentration depend solely on the steady, smooth and rhythmic sound of the inhalation and exhalation".

He lists the important Kumbhakas or Pranayamas as Surya Bhedana, Ujjayi, Sitkari, Sitali, Bhastrika, Brahmari, Murccha and Plavini. He also warns us that, though Pranayama can cure all diseases, it may cause a multitude of problems if performed wrongly.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF PRANAYAMA

Overall health and well being: According to the Hatha Pradipika, when the nerves are purified by Pranayama the body becomes slender and lustrous, gastric fire increases, inner sounds are heard and excellent health is attained. Yogi Swatmarama says that Surya Bhedana purifies the sinuses, cures Vata disorders and removes worms. Ujjayi is said to cure the disorders of phlegm as and of the Dhatus (humors). He says that Sitkari creates an enviable condition of body where there is no hunger, thirst, sleep or lassitude. Shetali relieves colic, spleenomegaly, fever and bile disorders. He also states that hunger and thirst are alleviated and even the most dangerous of poisons are neutralized. Bhastrika has the capacity to cure disorders of phlegm, bile and gas and helps to increase the gastric fire.

Brain Function: Memory, intelligence and creativity are enhanced through the practice of Pranayama. This is of great value in children as it helps them to realise and actualize their inherent potential in all walks of life. Yogic breathing through single nostril also increases spatial scores, speed of mental processing and dexterity of the tasks. Mukh Bhastrika improves the speed of reaction and this is useful in mentally challenged children who have a delayed reaction time. Pranayama produces an improvement of neural function at both central and peripheral levels of the nervous system and also produces a balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic aspects of the autonomic nervous system. This homeostatic 'Samatvam' is of use to combat stress disorders that are the scourge of modern man. Pranayamas such as Nadi Shuddhi and Nadi Shoddhana are important for cleansing the nervous system and it is said that Nadi Shuddhi can cleanse all the 72,000 Nadis. Just as water, when run in opposite directions cleanses the water pipe, the process of breathing in the opposite nostrils leads to turbulence and cleansing of the nervous system.

Right nostril breathing influences the left brain while left nostril breathing the right brain function. Right brain is the creative, artistic, intuitive aspect whereas left brain the analytical and calculating aspect of our personality. Thus alternate nostril Pranayamas such as Nadi Shuddhi, Nadi Shoddhana, Loma Viloma and Aloma Viloma help cerebral cleansing and the creation of a balanced personality. As these alternate-nostril-breathing techniques stimulate different divisions of the central and autonomic nervous systems, they have useful implications in treating psychophysiological disorders associated with hemispheric and autonomic imbalance. Spatial performance of males is better during right nostril breathing and verbal performance better during left nostril breathing. In females spatial performance is better during left nostril breathing. Thus many learning disabilities can be treated using such Pranayama

Emotional health: Emotions and breath are known to have a deep relationship. Animals such as the rat and rabbit have fast breathing and so are extremely nervous,



mentally unstable, emotionally restless and live only for short periods of time. In contrast, the elephant and turtle are slow, deep breathers and consequently have calmer personality and longer lives. Conscious, deep and regular breathing can synchronise and reinforce inherent cardiovascular rhythms and modify baroreflex sensitivity. This may be attained by practice of Pranayamas such as Ujjayi, Savitri, Sukha, Sukha Purvaka and Pranava Pranayamas.

Autonomic and metabolic function: Right nostril breathing correlates with the activity phase of the basic rest activity cycle, it activates the sympathetic nervous system as shown by an increase in the oxygen consumption whereas left nostril breathing decreases sympathetic activity as manifested by an increase in volar galvanic skin resistance. Surya Pranayama results in correction of low blood pressure to normal levels, increased heart rate, increased skin conductance and increased body temperature. This also significantly increases metabolism and this is very useful in obesity and hypothyroidism. Right nostril breathing significantly increases blood glucose levels, whereas left nostril breathing lowers it and this is useful in understanding the mechanism by which Chandra Pranayama helps the diabetic patient. Chandra Pranayama produces a decrease in systolic, diastolic and mean blood pressures and this can be used as a prophylactic means to combat rises in blood pressure associated with everyday stress and strain of life. Left nostril breathing produces a significant increase in the baseline GSR suggestive of reduced sympathetic activity to the palmer sweat glands. This helps us understand the mechanism by which Chandra Pranayama helps to reduce blood pressure of hypertensives. As diabetes mellitus and hypertension coexist in a vast majority of patients, Chandra Pranayama can be used in such patients with great benefit to reduce both blood sugar as well as blood pressure.

Circulation: Yogic breathing involves improvement in oxygen consumption with better oxygen delivery, utilization and minimal energy expenditure. A higher work rate with reduced oxygen consumption per unit of work without increase in blood lactate levels has been reported. There is an accompanied increase in peripheral blood flow, along with a decrease in body weight. This is beneficial to patients suffering from diminished peripheral circulation and intermittent claudication. Regular and continuous use of any muscle prevents fat deposition, increases flexibility and heightens performance. Ujjayi with long and short Kumbhaka (breath holding) may exert its effects by alterations in the skeletal muscle activity, autonomic discharge, and cerebral blood flow. This is useful in treating geriatric patients who have impaired cerebral circulation. It is also useful in treating patients who are unable to do more vigorous practices.

Exercise and altitude tolerance: Slow breathing rate of Pranayama substantially reduces chemo reflex sensitivity and long-term practice leads to a generalised reduction in chemo reflex. This type of training can be useful in those who have to work at high altitude as well as divers.



Patients of breathlessness and laboured breathing can also benefit from such training.

Breathing disorders and lung function: Kapalabhati produces an increase in the low frequency and decrease in the high frequency band of the heart rate variability spectrum indicating increased sympathetic activity. This may help Asthmatic patients for whom sympathomimetic drugs are life saving in acute asthma. It is also useful in stimulating depressed patients and those suffering from disorders of excessive sleep such as narcolepsy. Lung function has been reported to improve in numerous studies after Pranayama training and the benefits include prolongation of breath holding time with increase in Forced Vital Capacity (FVC), Forced Vital Capacity in first second (FEV1), Maximum Voluntary Ventilation (MVV), Peak Expiratory Flow Rate (PEFR) and lowered respiratory rate. Patients of chronic lung diseases such as asthma, emphysema and bronchitis can derive immense benefit from these changes in lung function.

Relaxation: Breathing is the key to bridging the gap between body and mind is of vital importance in treating psychosomatic disorders. Savitri Pranayama produces a relaxant effect on the cardiovascular system and is extremely useful in hypertension as well as coronary artery disease. The long-term manipulation of breathing by practicing slow deep breathing results in the overstretching of pulmonary stretch receptors and this chronic manipulation may result in vagus blockage, thereby decreasing vagal manipulation. This also leads to a re-conditioning or re-learning of a healthy pattern of breathing with ample tidal volume and a slow rate. Abdominal breathing is correlated with better and more profound relaxation in any schedule of relaxation. Savitri Pranayama when performed in Shavasana produces deep relaxation and this helps alleviate the stress in many psychosomatic disorders such as hypertension, irritable bowel syndrome, peptic ulcer and asthma.



CONCLUSION

Pranayama has immense therapeutic potential in a wide range of psychosomatic disorders and can be used either as a monotherapy or in combination with Asanas and other aspects of Yoga. Importance must also be placed on right diet and right attitude while practicing Pranayama, as the body needs raw materials such as vitamins, minerals and water to heal itself through Pranayama. Pranayama is of vital importance in the Yoga Sadhana or Yogic discipline of any sincere Sadhak who is trying to achieve the state of Yoga. Unless the mind is controlled, the higher aspects of Yoga are not possible and the best and only way to really control the mind is by regular, dedicated and determined practice of Pranayama with awareness, consciousness and purity of thought, word and deed. Pranayama practise can only be possible if the field has been prepared by the sincere practice of the Yama, Niyama and Asana that are necessary preludes to Pranayama Sadhana.

Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani

Chairman : Yoganjali Natyalayam and ICYER

Hon General Secretary, Pondicherry Yogasana Assoc.



😊 PRĀNĀYĀMA: IMPLICATIONS OF THE ESOTERIC ASPECT FROM THE SANSKRIT.

Dr. Swami Yogamaharishi Gitananda Giri nailed the essence of Pranayama with the following succinct statement.

"Most mistakenly believe Pranayama to be "control of breath". In actual fact the word itself gives away its real meaning, which is "control of Prana", or control of the vital energy of the Universe as it flows through the human medium. This science of Pranayama is vast, and in Rishiculture Yoga, 130 different kinds of pranayama are taught....." The Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali: Satya Press, 1999

We might accept that the Western recognition of Yoga philosophy began in the 19th century with the emergence of Theosophy and Swami Vivekananda's lectures in America; however in the first few years of the 20th century another luminary set the stage for the emergence of "New Thought" (the precursor to the New Age Movement) and Yoga philosophy. The prodigious output of William Walter Atkinson, Solicitor and writer, who, amongst many pseudonyms, wrote books under the name of "Ramacharaka". Wikipedia provides an excellent resource about this remarkable man.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Walker_Atkinson

1903 William Walter Atkinson published The Hindu-Yogi Science Of Breath: his exposition of Prana is timeless "Prana is the name by which we designate a universal principle, which principle is the essence of all motion, force or energy, whether manifested in gravitation, electricity, the revolution of the planets, and all forms of life, from the highest to the lowest. It may be called the soul of Force and Energy in all their forms, and that principle which, operating in a certain way, causes that form of activity which accompanies Life.

This great principle is in all forms of matter, and yet it is not matter. It is in the air, but it is not the air nor one of its chemical constituents. Animal and plant life breathe it in with the air, and yet if the air contained it not they would die even though they might be filled with air. It is taken up by the system along with the oxygen, and yet is not the oxygen. The Hebrew writer of the book of Genesis knew the difference between the atmospheric air and the mysterious and potent principle contained within it. He speaks of neshemet ruach chayim, which, translated, means "the breath of the spirit of life." In the Hebrew neshemet means the ordinary breath of atmospheric air, and chayim means life or lives, while the word ruach means the "spirit of life," which occultists claim is the same principle which we speak of as Prana.

Prana is in the atmospheric air, but it is also elsewhere, and it penetrates where the air cannot reach. The oxygen in the



air plays an important part in sustaining animal life, and the carbon plays a similar part with plant life, but Prana has its own distinct part to play in the manifestation of life, aside from the physiological functions."

Chapter IV. The Esoteric Theory of Breath
Yogi Ramacharaka 1903

Very good for 1903!

Hidden within the correct transliteration from Sanskrit of the popular spelling of "Pranayama" lie the full implications and I will demonstrate this by reminding we Western students of the existence of two "a" sounds in Sanskrit: Short "a" properly transliterated as "a" and the long "ā" properly transliterated into English as "aa" or "ā". The confusion in English, since our alphabet contains only one symbol ("a"), leads to many errors in translation. The prefix "Pran" when examined, demonstrates the principle rather well since the "a" is actually a long "ā" so we get:

प्राण (praaN.h) = life (alternative transliteration= prān)

प्राण (praaNa) = Soul (alternative transliteration= prāna)

*Please note for simplicity I am only dealing with the vowel "a" and ignoring the correct marks for other Sanskrit words used in this discussion. As an example of the complexities there are four different symbols in Sanskrit, each with a variance of pronunciation, for the consonant, "n".

T The confusion of favouring "control" is understandable when you appreciate the word designating this in Sanskrit, is a short "a".
i.e.

यम (yama) = the god of death,

Now we are ready to dissect the word "Pranayama" to

प्राणायाम (praaNaayaama) = discover it is really correctly transliterated as "praan – aayaama"–not "Prana –yama". (or prāṇāyāma")

Which splits into two words i.e. Praaṇ-aayaama

The meaning of "aayaama" reveals the mystery and key aayaama (āyāma)= expansion, stretching or extending.

Western medicine teaches that normal respiration is 15 to 20 breaths a minute and the average rate of respiration is 18 breaths per minute. Although we are conscious of inhalation and exhalation we generally are unaware of another two phases – which is precisely the difference between unconscious automatic breathing and the Yogi's conscious awareness. A normal respiratory cycle consists of four phases:



1. Inhalation - in Yoga this is called Puraka pronounced pooraka.
2. Momentary pause or retention - Yoga terminology for this phase is Kumbhaka i.e. pot, pronounced koombhaka.
3. Exhalation or expiration - Rechaka pronounced raychaka.
4. Momentary pause or suspension - Shunyaka i.e. void, pronounced shoonyaka.



Yoga, for at least a millennium, has practiced: * controlling and/or * becoming fully aware of all four phases of the respiratory cycle as a means of transcending the physical body and experiencing profound altered states of consciousness.

Thus "aayaama" (āyāma) means expansion, stretching or extending of the 4-phase breath cycle under conscious control. prānāyāma easily slips into the concept of "control" as the efficacy of prānāyāma is precisely the extending or changing of the four fundamental phases of respiration requiring 'attention' and "intention".

The therapeutic effects of prānāyāma are understandable when we realize the rate of breathing is a reflection of the emotional state - as much as the pulse.

The therapeutic effects of pranayama are understandable when we realize the rate of breathing is a reflection of the emotional state - as much as the pulse.

The ancient Greeks recognized this concept with the use of the word "phrenic" the term in anatomy for a twin set of nerves which insert into the diaphragm, the major respiratory muscle controlling the rate and depth of breathing. phrenic Latin phrenicus, from Greek phren-, phren

1: of or relating to the diaphragm

2: of or relating to the mind

Merriam-Webster

Emphasizing the point to clearly show the relationship between breathing and emotional state consider the following:

c.1374, from O.Fr. frenetike, from L. phreneticus, from Gk. phrenetikos "mad, delirious, frantic," from phren (gen. phrenos)
"diaphragm, heart, mind," of unknown origin. A doublet of frantic.

Another example of "phrenic" relating to mental processes is our psychiatric term "Schizophrenia".

Alter the breath phase ratios and you alter the mental state and associated physiological body parameters.

The genius of Dr. Swami Yogamaharishi Gitananda Giri was demonstrated in the 1950's when he released a system of respiratory phase ratio alterations that targeted different systems of the body. Such discoveries have been continued by his brilliant son, Dr. Yogacharya Ananda Balayogi



Bhavanani MBBS, who conducted research on a special technique of Gitananda Yoga known as "Mukha Bhastrika" establishing that a short session of Mukha Bhastrika pranayama dramatically increased reaction time thus indicating arousal of the Sympathetic portion of the A.N.S..

Dr Ananda's paper was published in the Indian journal Physiology Pharmacology, 2003, titled "Acute effect of Mukha Bhastrika (A Yogic Bellows Type Breathing) upon Reaction Time". This is just one of many research papers he has published. Dr. Yogacharya Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani MBBS will be touring the U.S.A. in Early October, 2008 and is a keynote speaker at the Yoga Therapy Conference

<http://yogatherapyconference.com/>

Details available by emailing doraja123@aol.com

The mid-twentieth century scientific exploitation of breathing as a mechanism for altering the state of mind may well have begun with the early anaesthesiologists who observed that when the exhaled breath became twice the length of the inhaled breath this indicated the onset of anaesthesia.

Contemporary administration of anaesthetics now involves sophisticated computer physiology monitors so this fact is not so relevant. However, in the last five years, the development of Biofeedback monitors to train patients to elongate the exhaled breath, compared with the duration of the inhaled breath, as a technique for insomnia and Hypertension has led to mechanical- pranayama.

"Resperate" and "Stress Eraser" are the two most prominent current devices.

Resperate:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/resperate/AN01523>

<http://www.stresseraser.com/sleep>

Finally the purpose of pranayama might be well summed up with this quote from Prashna Upanishad.

"Prana holds the body together.

Prana is immortality.

O prana all the world depends on you.

Prana is born of the Self."

(Prashna Upanishad, the Breath of Life, question 2).

Dr. Swami Anandakapila Saraswati
Ambassador, Gitananda Yoga Association

☺ PRANAYAMA – MY DAILY PRACTICES

With respect to your request to give my thoughts on the topic Pranayama, I felt that it may be more meaningful to respond to it, if I described the Pranayama practices, which made up my daily sadhana during the last twenty years, as they had been not only invaluable in experiencing good

health, despite my advanced age, but also helped me to recover from a ten year virulent hay fever in 1990, a heart attack in 1996, a stroke in 1997 and more recently unstable high blood pressure.

Those who had the good fortune to learn under revered Swamiji may remember how he advised us to learn all his practices (there were hundreds of them) experience them all, but finally decide on a few Pranayamas (and other practices) in terms of suitability, efficacy, constraints of time, etc, and make them the basis of a daily sadhana.

A sadhana if done daily, whether it is fair weather or foul (in short - in whatever circumstance) produces a discipline of a high order of both body and mind, resulting in their mastery. This simple truth fulfils one of the main objectives of yoga.

Apart from my own reasons I also do this to encourage my colleagues, if they are not already embarked on a daily sadhana, and suggest that they should do so early. It is absolutely essential that we become living testimonies of our discipline to inspire confidence in our students that we have mastered what we are teaching.

I wish to cite two examples to justify my contention. Let me first refer to the confidence I was able to inspire in a psychologist and psychiatrist student of mine:

"This is undoubtedly the best programme of instruction that I have been through in my area of health and self development. The reasons:

Unflagging encouragement & positive reinforcement.
Instruction by a teacher who has clearly mastered that which he is teaching (rare in this age)
A very systematic and cleverly laid out programme and excellent manual. A pace that suited me very well".

Dr. Paul Holman of Victoria

The second was when I went to consultant physician, Dr Kuan Chin of Victoria, to be cleared that I had no cardiovascular conditions before I was accepted for an operation on my right Achilles tendon in December 2000. He could not believe that I was 78 years of age as I was in perfect health. He inquired from me what I did to maintain such good health and said that he would like to experience the same good health when he reached eighty. I briefly described to him my daily sadhana and the benefits each practice gave to the body-mind complex. He wanted me to inform him of the next workshop after my convalescence. So I did. And he attended it and has become one of my dedicated students ever since.

I normally do my sadhana first thing in the morning. It takes three hours.



My first practice is Nasargha Bhastrika (or Healing Breath) Nasarga Bhastrika strengthens and harmonizes the respiratory, cardio-vascular, and digestive systems. It also gives a superior massage to the vital organs within the



abdominal and chest cavities and to a lesser extent the pelvic cavity.

As a rule we are more toxic than sick. 60% of the toxic and metabolic wastes are expelled from the lungs in the form of carbon dioxide. Nasarga Bhastrika is a superior detoxifying technique.

It is very powerful, and an ideal practice to start the day's sadhana. It truly wakes one up. It shatters Tamas (lethargy) and reduces over-reactions/hypersensitivities, leading to efficient functioning of the cells and greater relaxation during the day. The process helps to cultivate concentration, and affects a certain amount of mastery and integration of both body and mind.

Normally I do three rounds of 120 per round. At one stage I heard that the maximum rounds possible was 36 (x 120), I used to start with 9 rounds of 120 per round, add one more every day till I reached 36 rounds and then decrease by one daily till I reached 9 rounds. I then re-started the cycle. But when it was brought to my notice that I was disturbing my unstable high blood pressure I went back to my normal practice.

Being now 85 years of age I now confine myself only to one round.

My second practice is Kapala Bhati or a breathing technique to cleanse the five elements in the brain. (Earth – physical matter of the brain; Water – cerebro-spinal fluid; Fire – nerve tissues & cells; Air – pressure holding the brain in the skull cavity; Ether – the subtle energies moving in the arachnoid & sub-arachnoid cavities of the brain) Kapala Bhati cleanses tumours, brain obstructions, cells, the spinal fluid, impeded or short circuited nerve impulses, and congestion in the skull cavity and unbalanced state of mind. Starts new neural pathways and also improves eyesight. I only do one round of this.

The third practice is Nadi Shuddhi & Nadi Shoddhana (or cleansing & purifying breath)

Nadi Shuddhi - purifier

A pacifying purifier, which activates the para-sympathetic nervous system, produces a hypo-metabolic state and repairs the nervous system. It balances both solar (positive) and lunar (negative) energies, and so creates the optimum conditions within the body-mind complex.

Nadi Shoddhana – cleanser

A gross cleanser of toxic matter in the nervous system and energy blockages in the subtle energy system (electromagnetic field). It also activates the sympathetic nervous system in a controlled manner and produces nor-adrenaline to counteract and neutralise any excess adrenaline collected in the system. It retards and regulates the adrenaline response, cleanses, purifies and tones the nervous system and at a deeper level the nadis, the energy channels in the subtle-energy body or electro-magnetic field. It steadies the nerves, balances both energies within and gives the benefit of the specific rhythm as well.





As you know it incorporates Savitri Pranayama (or Rhythmic Breath)

When I heard the ultimate rhythm was 64 seconds-in: 32 seconds held-in:: 64 seconds out: 32 seconds held-out, totalling 192 seconds (or taking 3 minutes and 12 seconds for one breath) I used to finish the practice with 9 such breaths. I was not aware such practices of greater duration of holding the breath in or out was done only with Bandhas. So in 1996 this practice caused me a heart attack, as I was unaware of the need for bandhas to be applied. With my Pranava Aum and Meditation programme I completely recovered myself, and not realising that the practice without bandhas had caused it, I commenced the practice again. This time (in 1997) I went down with a stroke. Again I completely recovered with my Pranava Aum and Meditation programme, but since then I had become wiser. So I now stop at 20 seconds in: 10 seconds held-in:: 20 seconds out: 10 seconds held-out, but with Bandhas from 18:9::18:9.

The fourth practice is Mukha Bhastrika (or Detoxifying Breath)

Mukha Bhastrika expels the metabolic and toxic wastes in the body in the form of carbon dioxide.

(The build up of carbon dioxide in the lungs results in respiratory acidosis and it's connected respiratory diseases. Its neglect results in circulatory acidosis and its connected heart conditions.

Elimination from the body is in the following proportions: Bowels 10%, bladder 10%, skin 20-%, lungs 60%.

Three rounds of Mukha Bhastrika with 18 forced exhalations are equated to: 9 days of fast on Water, 21 days of fast on Liquids and 3 months of Detoxifying Diet. Carbon dioxide is also a vaso-dilator.)

Constricted blood vessels in the sinuses, nasal passages, glottis, throat, bronchial tubes, etc where dirt and mucus is collected are cleansed by carbon dioxide in this forced exhalation. This practice also sets in motion the other purification mechanisms in the body. I do three rounds of this.

Followed this, I execute the energy balancing poses of Dharmika Asana & Supta Vajra Asana and end the practice with a half spinal twist, Dhamika Asana creates the optimum conditions within the body-mind complex as when a child in one's mother's womb.; stretches the spinal column, with the 32 pairs of spinal nerves, the ligaments and para-vertebral muscles and tones and regulates them all; positively charges the electro-magnetic field.

Supta Vajra Asana charges the electro-magnetic field negatively and also integrates all three parts of the brain - the limbic or reptilian, mammalian and neo cortex. Hence Dhamika Asana & Supta Vajra Asana balance both energies within the body-mind complex.

My fifth & final practice is Pranava AUM & Meditation.

At this stage I plunge into the practice of Pranava AUM as developed by me which includes Adham, Madhyam, Adhyam and Mahat Yoga Pranayama done in a sequence in different ratios and rhythms and do 54 chants of AUM.

I follow this with 54 chants of Panchatchara Mantra.

During this programme I find time to do the Pawanmukthasana series to make my joints flexible and supple.

The sum total of the benefits from this simple but powerful Pranava AUM & Meditation practice may be summarized as follows;

Physical plane of existence

Making body flexible, supple and stable. It includes an increase in breathing capacity/intake. Activating the circulation of blood and lymphatic drainage and ensuring an independent supply of oxygenated blood to the heart.

Generating healthy blood, glandular and bodily fluid cells.

Producing elastin, an enzyme, at the mid-chest, which makes the 62 trillion cells biologically young. Breathing made slow, deep and rhythmic, resulting in slowing down all the bodily processes – the ancient secret to good health and longevity.

Astral plane of existence

Activating the Chakras, resulting in a better flow of prana into the respective nerve plexuses and endocrine glands.

Enhancing the psychic qualities of the Chakras and transforming the personality and character of the student/patient to face life with equanimity and fortitude.

Neutralizing past emotions and traumas of this and previous lives stored in the Chakras. Activating a process of healing at the physical, astral and causal planes of existence.

Attuning to the vibratory sounds of the body, mind and self-consciousness, the universe, cosmic mind and cosmic-consciousness, the physical, astral and causal energy bodies, and integrating them.

Causal plane of existence

Transcending the wakeful, dream and deep sleep states of consciousness associated with the three planes of existence and moving into a state beyond conceptualization – the state of causal silence within, wherein renewal, repair and self-healing take place and where peace and happiness reign, with resultant good health.

I end the session with forty-five minutes of Kriya Yoga meditation. In the evening according to the availability of time I do either Kriya Yoga meditation or Pranava AUM & Meditation or nothing.

To above, I may add that I have incorporated the Japanese method of sipping 640 ml litres of water on an empty stomach when I commence my sadhana at 6 am, and about 8.15 am I brush my teeth, light my shrine lamp and pray, before commencing my Kriya Yoga meditation.

(For old and serious diseases as well as modern illnesses



the water treatment had been found successful by a Japanese medical society as a 100% cure for the following diseases:

Headache, body ache, heart system, arthritis, fast heart beat, epilepsy, excess fatness, bronchitis asthma, TB, meningitis, kidney and urine diseases, vomiting, gastritis, diarrhoea, piles, diabetes, constipation, all eye diseases, womb, cancer and menstrual disorders, ear nose and throat diseases).

I hope the description of my sadhana is helpful to you, dear colleague, to design one on your own (if you have so far not) and practise it daily.

May I end my article with another feedback?

“Sri Bala is a master of Vibrational Breath Therapy. He does this with such enthusiasm that it is infectious. Sri Bala himself is a striking example of what he practices”

Professor Avni Sali MBBS, PhD, FRACS, FACS, FACNEM,
President - Australasian Integrative Medicine Association
Director, National Institute of Integrative Medicine

Sri Bala Ratnam

*Founder, Vibrational Breath Therapy
(based on Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga)*

😊 Pranayama – The fourth limb of Patanjali’s Ashtanga Yoga

There are a Total of 120 Major / Minor Pranayamas in the Rishiculture / Gitananda Tradition. Pranayama is the fourth of Eight Limbs or Steps of Patanjali,s Ashtanga Yoga. Pranayama is a Vehicle for the Control of Energy [Prana] and Breath. Presently in classes we are practicing:

No15 Sukha Purvaka Pranayama

There are four Variations involving the four Principal Functions of the Control of Prana [Life Force].

Rhythm: 1:1

- 1) In Breath [Puraka]
- 2) Held In Breath [Kumbaka]
- 3) Out Breath [Rechaka]
- 4) Held Out Breath [Shunyaka]

As with any Pranayama the combination of variations and timing requires qualified guidance. When we breathe in (through nose) in this case, the air contains 21% oxygen (approx) which nourishes the blood stream via the red blood cells, which contains Haemoglobin, (which contain iron), that attracts oxygen. Using the entire surface area of our lungs (some of which may not be used) improves this oxygen exchange process and is a benefit of this Pranayama.

No86 Savitri Pranayama (Rhythmic Breath)

Also consists of the four principle functions of Breath/ Prana.

Rhythm: 2x1x2x1

Emotions are linked with the Mammalian Brain (emotions need to feel), these emotions exist in the Pranayama



Kosha, therefore a particular count/rhythm, can assist with controlling these emotional swings. Another rhythm/count is in harmony with the cellular vibration of blood, muscles and skeletal system of the body, excellent to rejuvenate.

Savitri Pranayama also has the effect of reducing respiratory rate, which deepens relaxation.

I.K.Taimni in “Science of Yoga” reinforces that these breathing exercises should, however, not be taken as variants of “Deep-Breathing”, but rather at eventually gaining control of Pranic currents, that move through the Nadis. A similarity may be made here with electrical energy, where voltage and current (amps) co-exist in the same electrical cable/wire, we can increase/decrease current, voltage remains constant. Electricity is treated with respect.

These Pranayamas also need to be balanced with regular practice of Hathenas, which aid in strengthening the diaphragm and allowing air flow into all parts of the lobes (lungs).



No 82 Pranava Pranayama

(Primordial sound breath), using hand Mudras (gestures) creates harmony in the lower, middle and upper parts of the whole body, through the vibrational effects of Nada (sound).

As an adult’s lungs hold (approx) 5 litres of air (which includes water vapour) when practicing Pranayama’s , water must be “sipped”, to remain hydrated.

For an individual who has a “3” Birthpath in Yantra (science of numbers) Pranayama Yoga, can be an excellent practice, as 3 is associated with the lungs.

Yogacharya Muralidharan

😊 Pranayama - Disciplines for Emotional Control

In several mystical self-development systems, there exists the concept of a universal life force, an all-pervading pneumatic vitality. Various cultures call it by various names: Chi by the Chinese, Shekinah by the Kabbalists, Rouhaniat by the Sufis and Mana by the Hawaiian Kahunas. The Hindu Yogis call it Prana.

It is no secret to the initiate that in order to be successful both on the spiritual and mundane planes of existence, one requires much vitality. Vitality to go beyond one’s physical, emotional and mental limitations for self-realization in the inner world and self-actualization in the outer world.

Yoga has devised such a science to extract and direct an inordinate amount of Prana or vital energy within the self. It is called Pranayama or control (Yama) of the vital force (Prana).



The Rishis (sages) of India experimented with and devised many techniques through conscious breathing of controlling this vital energy of the Universe. They found that by altering the length, rhythm, choosing which lung compartments are filled, which nostrils are consciously used to breathe in and breathe out, combining visualizations, focusing on loci in and out of the body and/or in conjunction with bodily gestures and locks such as Mudras and Bandhas, one is able to have different experiences and results. What's more the Rishis also discovered that in the context of rhythm, regularity and repetition commonly known as Sadhana (or a concerted spiritual regimen) one can scientifically repeat the effects in the mind-body complex of the practitioner. Therefore Pranayama has multifarious effects on the organism depending on the technique used. Some of these effects are:

Strengthening the inner essence promoting vitality and health

Cleansing the nerves and body organs (Annamaya Kosha)

Cleansing the psychic pathways or Nadis (Pranamaya Kosha)

Cleansing the subconscious mind of traumas

Calming the mind (remember the adjunct – stop what you are doing or thinking when under stress, take a deep breath and count to ten and release the breath slowly letting go – this is actually a technique taught to anxiety sufferers)

Cleansing the brain (a form of oxygenated psychic churning of the cerebrospinal fluid)

Purifying the emotions (again take a deep breath and count to ten)

Cooling the body (like a cool breeze on a summer day for the body)

Heating the body (fanning the internal heat)

Mind control – by slowing down the mental chatter due to concentrating and manipulating a natural physiological function consciously, and in the more advanced techniques, awakening the Kundalini or inherent life force of the individual for spiritual emancipation.

Rishi Patanjali codified the practices of Yoga into an eight limb system – a hierarchy of successive spiritual stations or states. Pranayama or the control of the vital force stands as the fourth limb on the path to self-realization. Together with Yama, Niyama and Asana, Pranayama form the Bahiranga or the outer limbs of Yoga practice – the moral (the restraints and observances that lead to psychic integrity) and physical foundations for the inner life and self-realization to flourish.

Sage Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras first mentions Pranayama in Verse 34 of Chapter I Samadhi-Pada (or Yoga and its aims):

Pracchardana-vidharanabhyam va Pranasya

'The mind may also be calmed by expulsion and retention of the breath'

Here Rishi Patanjali provides an actual physical technique to control the mind by controlling and bringing to awareness the breathing mechanism. An uncontrolled breath or irregular

breathing leads to mental disturbance and despondency as illustrated in Verses 30 and 31 in the same chapter:

Vyashi-styana-samsaya-pramada-alasya-avirati-bhranti-darsana-alabdha-bhumikatra-anavasthitatvani citta-viksepas-te'ntarayah

'Sickness, mental laziness, doubt, lack of enthusiasm, sloth, craving for sense-pleasure, false perception, despair caused by failure to concentrate and unsteadiness in concentration: these distractions are the obstacles to knowledge' meaning they are distractions in consciousness and hence distance our awareness of our true self within (the aim of our Sadhana). While verse 30 advise of the distractions, verse 31 provides the symptoms of the causes.

Duhkha-daurmanasya-angam-ejayatva-vasa-prasvasa viksepasahabhuvah

'These distractions are accompanied by grief, despondency, trembling of the body and irregular breathing'

The tamasic qualities in verse 30 can be removed by the practice of various concentrations, cultivation of Sattvic attitudes and including Pranayama (verse 34 above).

In Chapter II, Sadhana-Pada (or Yoga and its practice), of the Yoga Sutras, Rishi Patanjali brings our awareness to four kind of Pranayama. I shall now briefly touch on each:

49. Tasmin-sati svasa-prasvasayor-gati-vicchedah pranayamah

'After mastering posture, one must practice control of the Prana (Pranayama) by stopping the motions of inhalation and exhalation'

The next verse informs us how the breath may be stopped by an exercise of the conscious will.

50. Bahya-abhyantara-stambha-vrttir-desa-kala-samkhyabhih paridrsto dirgha-suksmah

'The breath may be stopped externally, or internally, or checked in mid-motion, and regulated according to place, time and a fixed number of moments, so that the stoppage is either protracted or brief'

The myriad techniques of Pranayama are best learnt from an Acharya as it is a science that requires skill in action and not without potential difficulties if not practiced properly. After all Prana or the life force provides all the powers of the body as well as the functions of the senses and mind. An unbalanced Pranayama practice could therefore lead to an unbalance in any of the above.

Patanjali then leads us to a fourth kind of Pranayama which does not arise from a conscious effort of the will. This is where the breath naturally ceases due to the Sadhak being deeply absorbed in concentration. Prolongation of this state leads to Samadhi or enstatic absorption.





51. Bahya-abhyantara-visaya-aksepi caturthah
'The fourth kind of Pranayama is the stoppage of the breath which is caused by concentration upon external or internal objects'

A classic technique of Pranayama to reach this auspicious Kevalya Khumbakha state is the So-Hum Pranayama.

Verse 52 goes on to say:
Tatah ksiyate prakasa avaranam
'As the result of this, the covering of the Inner Light is removed'

Regular Pranayama practice will purify the mind of its covering and fluctuations to reveal the 'Inner Light' of spiritual discrimination. That is discrimination between the Real or permanent identity, the Atma, and the unreal or impermanent – our thoughts, memories, mind images, fantasies, vain desires, limited sensory perceptions and anything that basically is subject to the laws of change.

In a Yoga Sadhana context, Pranayama is used to create an effect in the body-mind complex to give rise either to a temporary or a permanent new state of equilibrium. These can range from health and healing considerations to developing higher spiritual qualities and potential.

Yoga being a true holistic science, Pranayama to provide its full benefits together with the least contradictions must be practiced within the context of the eight limbs. The Acharya, having mastered various Pranayama and their resulting states of consciousness, is the best guide for the aspirant.

Yogachariya Devidasan Giri

☺ **Pranayama – the many facets**

The definition of pranayama is control or expansion (yama) of the vital life force (prana). The word 'prana' - pra (having prior existence) and ana short for anna (a cell). An atom or molecule is called anu.

This vital life force is absorbed into the body through exposed nerve endings, but chiefly through special nerve ends in the nostrils from the air passing over them, and nerve ends in the mouth and the back of the throat from food and drink. In order to absorb the most prana from the air we breathe and the food and drink we take, we need to be slow, deep, relaxed breathers, chew our food well and sip or wash fluids around the mouth, before swallowing. The ancient yogi Gorakshanath warned people in India they were jeopardising their health by being shallow breathers, using only 1/8 of their lung capacity. He would be shocked to know that people today use only 1/10 of their lung capacity.

The spiritual significance of breath may be understood by the fact that inspiration, the word for incoming breath is derived from the Greek word inspiro, to be in spirit or in God,

and the word expiration (outgoing breath) come from the Greek word exspiro meaning to be out of spirit, or to die. The Christian bible speaks of God "breathing" life into man. In all Indian languages the word to die is Apana, or loss of vital life force. BKS Iyengar in his book "Light on Pranayama" says pranayama is the science of breath, being the hub around which life revolves. Sri IK Taimni in his book 'The Science of Yoga', says "Prana is vital life force that connects matter with energy and mind with consciousness". Swami Rama claims that for Hatha Yogis, Pranayama is the final way of liberation. He says for Raja Yogis, Pranayama is an important step to awaken the Sushumna leading to the state of deep Dhyana and ultimately the arousal of Kundalini Shakti". Those yogis who have a higher spiritual aim need to learn the techniques in the science of Pranayama.

Modern Yoga researchers and writers who have found limited information on pranayama, asanas and kriyas assume there are not very many. Ancient Rishis only taught these practices by word of mouth to those who were fit to receive them. Some don't mention pranayama at all and others only very little and give no instruction, which leads one to believe that pranayama is not important. In his yoga sutras, Patanjali writes of there being only four functions of breathing, i.e. prana (the in breath, vidharana or kumbaka (the held in breath), rechaka (the out breath), and apana (the held out breath). The control of these four is pranayama. Dr. Swami Gitananda uses the terms, puraka (the incoming breath), rechaka (outgoing breath), kumbaka (held in breath) and shunyaka (held out breath). He also uses the terms Pranic flow for incoming breath and apana for the outgoing breath in his polarity kriyas.

Patanjali places pranayama as the fourth limb in his ashtanga (eight limb) system of yoga. The first four limbs (bahiranga) are the outer limbs, and last four (antaranga) are the inner limbs. The eight limbs are :- yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. This means we need some knowledge and mastery of the three preceding limbs before practicing pranayama; also that its practise prepares us for the higher inner controls of senses and mind in pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi.

In the Rishiculture system of yoga i.e. Gitananda Yoga, swamiji taught at least 120 pranayamas each of which was given equal importance. There are at least 130 pranayamas mentioned in ancient sanskrit texts. The pranayas we seek to expand and control are divided into 12 aspects i.e. the pancha prana vayus (five major pranayas) and upa prana vayus (minor vital airs (5)). Two others are called akasha vayu, and chitra vayu. These prana flows control every physical, mental and psychic function in the pancha kosha (the five bodies of a man).

The more than 120 pranayamas that swamiji taught were divided into 4 groups.

(1) Yoga pranayamas for the correction of breathing





difficulties, cleansing the respiratory system, toning up the nervous system and strengthening the mind. e.g. Vibhaga, Bhastrika, Kapalabhati, Shetali, and Sitkari.

- (2) Pranayamas for bringing harmony to all systems of the body. e.g. Sukha pranayama, and the polarity kriyas.
- (3) Meditative practices or samyama pranayamas for sensory withdrawal control, concentration and meditation e.g. Bramari pranava, and Savitri Pranayamas.
- (4) Shakti Pranayamas for spectacular rejuvenation, healing and Kundalini arousing routines. e.g. Ujjayi and Surya Bhedana Pranayamas.



Yogi Dr. Swama Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj was renowned as the greatest authority on pranayama of the 20th century.

He put great importance and emphasis on it and incorporated it in all his lessons. Sri Bala Ratman of Melbourne, Australia, has devised a therapy using the Pranava Aum which synchronises the bija mantras of Aum with sectional breathing, has found it effective in healing many different diseases, some of them chronic. The immense therapeutic value of pranayama has yet to be realised. Emotions are stabilised and controlled with pranayama. It increases energy, bringing freshness to mind and body, helping us to perform with skill in action. Pranayama practice leads to a pure mind being calm and focused which facilitates Dharana and Dhyana leading to Samadhi. A harmonising of the individual breath (panda prana) with the cosmic breath (brahmanda prana) is realised by the practice of pranayama. The decreased oxygen supply to the brain as we age causes impairment of brain, mind activity, and can be minimised by the use of pranayama techniques.

When the whole automatic breathing function is taken over by the higher brain in the conscious breathing of pranayama, our own evolution or spiritual growth is enhanced. So pranayama is an invaluable tool for serious students of yoga.

Yogacharini Wendy Snape

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Pranayama – Becoming Master of our Destiny

I see pranayama as a way to control our destiny – because the practice of Pranayama enables us to control our Life Force (Prana) - how this is so I believe, is due to the clarity that occurs when we master our breathing – as opposed to our breathing mastering us - us being the body/mind/spirit.

At first this might seem a somewhat paradoxical statement, as breathing is part of the autonomic nervous system and therefore will happen regardless of our control. However, the

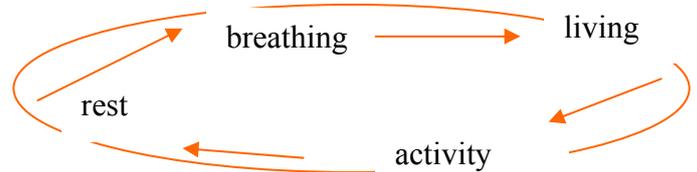


key is not that it happens regardless, but the circumstances in which it happens. When we introduce intention to the control, that circumstance then connects the mind, which then brings in awareness. The circumstance of awareness, then leads to conscious living and that leads to being master of our destiny - with clarity.

Clarity is my new inspiration.... I have been on a clarity mission for a while now, it seems to have invaded my brain and become my word de jour for now and it makes a positive difference in my life.

If we see Pranayama as life management, we are faced with a huge responsibility when viewing this in the context of living our best life - in that the quality of our breathing will reflect the quality of our living, because the quality of our breathing, will reflect the quality of our thinking, and our thoughts become our actions and so our Life.

I call it our Circle of Life Balance – because through it all we need to breathe; and to do it all well, we need to breathe well. Simply put -



It all seems so simple and yet so many of us miss the point or even are aware that there is a point and a choice. In my work in schools I see so much of this feeling of disempowerment (and I am sure this is not exclusive to schools) and have for many years presented workshops just on breathing. Although it is received as something important and does raise awareness at the time, sadly, like most things that are taken for granted, they are easily dismissed and forgotten - until people get ill, and then they desperately search the recesses of their minds for any information or shift in thinking that might help their situation.

However, there is always the one or few who do connect and it is important to be aware of this. Two years ago one of the teachers who participated in one of my programs was pregnant at the time and although my program had nothing to do with pregnancy, after she had the baby and visited us at school, she very much made my day and week really, in fact taught me a big lesson and what I am about to say might give us heart to keep repeating our messages, even though we might feel that nobody is listening.

She said, "Candida, when I was in labour, I thought about you" (my mind raced as to why this would have happened) "and I thought about the breathing you taught us, so I did it and it helped me during the birth". At this point this person became master of her destiny in that she took control of

her breathing and was living consciously in that moment (and what a moment!) changing her life at that time – was Master of her destiny.



So even though it may look as though people are not receiving, that may not always be the case, and also people might apply the information (and so might we all) at the most interesting of times – we just never know.

Candida Vassallo

OTHER IMPORTANT DATES



ASHRAM DIARY DATES

18/07/2008	Vyasa Guru Poornima
24/07/2008	Swami Gitananda's calendar birthday
01/08/2008	Gurupujas of Srila Sri Ambalavana Swamigal and Srila Sri Subramaniya Swamigal
15-30/08/2008	Special short term course at ICYER
24/08/2008	Yognat presents dance drama in honour of Swamiji Gitananda's Jayanthi
05/09/2008	Dr Ananda embarks on 7-week tour of UK, USA and Europe
13/09/2008	Amma's Birthday

ASHRAM EVENTS 2008

JUNE

19th Srila Sri Manikkaswamigal Guru Puja
 20th -30th Special short term course at ICYER
 29th - 15th Annual day of Yoganjali Natyalayam

JULY

18th Vyasa Guru Poornima
 24th Swamiji's calendar birthday



AUGUST

1st Gurupujas of Srila Sri Ambalavana Swamigal and Srila Sri Subramaniya Swamigal
 15th -30th Special short term course at ICYER
 24th Yognat presents dance drama in honour of Swamiji's Jayanthi

SEPTEMBER

5th Dr Ananda embarks on 7-week tour of UK, USA and Europe
 13th Amma's Birthday

18/07/2008	Full Moon	
29/07/2008	Guru Purnima	Day devotees offer puja to their Guru. This was the day when Vyasa, author of the Mahabharata was born.
01/08/2008	New Moon	
11/08/2008	Mahalakshmi Vrata	Puja performed by married Hindu women to seek the blessings of Mahalakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity.
16/08/2008	Full Moon	
16/08/2008	Raksha Bandhan	Festival celebrated mainly in northern Indian states. Rakhi is a special occasion to celebrate the chaste bond of love between a brother and a sister.
24/08/2008	Krishna Janmaashtami	Hindu festival celebrating the birth of Krishna
30/08/2008	New Moon	
03/09/2008	Ganesh Chaturthi	Celebration of the birth of Ganesh
12/09/2008	Onam	Harvest festival, celebrated mainly in the Indian state of Kerala. Like many other religious festivals in India, Onam is celebrated by people across all castes and faiths.
14/09/2008	Gowri Habba	Celebrated in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. Gowri is worshipped for her ability to bestow courage to her devotees. Newly wed couples are invited to the house of the groom's parents and served with varieties of food.
15/09/2008	Full Moon	
29/09/2008	New Moon	
30/09/2008	Navrati	Hindu festival of worship and dance. In Sanskrit the term literally means "nine nights"



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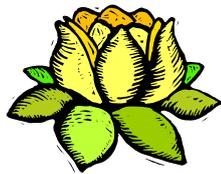
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