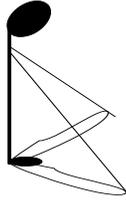


# Pranayam

Four Pranayams are explained here. They are (a) Bhastrika, (b) Kapalbhati, (c) Anulom-Vilome, and (d) Sheetal.

**Spine position during Pranayam:** You must keep the spine straight and the head should be tilting forward slightly, as shown in the diagram.



**Asans for any Pranayam:** This posture can be easily achieved in Padmasan or in Siddhasan. Siddhasan is for advanced practitioners and Padmasan is for everybody. If you cannot sit in Padmasan, then you can sit in Sukhasan. Whatever asan you use, you must keep the spine straight.

**Breathing:** Breathing should always be through the nose and the air should flow through the the throat. In some pranayams (such as Sheetal or Sheetkari, etc.) breathing-out is through the mouth but in general it is always from the nose. You must feel the flow of the air you breath-in or breath-out in your throat. This kind of breathing produces a sound (similar to snoring of a child), as a result a unique kind of vibration is produced in the throat (Wishudhdhaksh Chakra). The sound which comes from the throat is a part of the sound of mantra OM. So this is quite important to still the mind- an important requirement of any pranayam.

## Bhastrika

1. Sit in a pranayam position (padmasan or Sukhasan) with spine straight and head down (chin is close to the collar bone). Fix your sight at the Agyan Chakra (place between the eyebrows) with half-closed eyes. This is called Shambavi Mudra. You must maintain Shambavi Mudra for entire duration of the pranayam.
2. Breath-in and breath-out once (deep breathing). Next inhale a little (about 50% of the full breath) and expel the entire air with a burst just like Indian blacksmith's bellow. This expulsion must be sudden and must produce a "Dhakka" (or Jhatka) in your lungs. The better the Dhakka the better the pranayam. In a Dhakka the stomach muscles pull the stomach in and the out-going air expands your lungs. Do not apply too much force in this Dhakka. You must feel comfortable and relaxed. Always stay in Shambavi Mudra.
3. Repeat this inhalation (50%) and breathing-out (complete) with Dhakka with a rhythm. Repeat this at least 10 times and increase it slowly. Try to practice it for at least 3 minutes. Continue to stay in Shambavi Mudra.
4. At the end of the last Dhakka (breath-out cycle), nhale completely, hold your breath, (Antarik Kumbhak) keep your chin close to the collar bone (nearly touching, called Jalandhar Bandh) and stay in Shambavi Mudra. Keep antarik kumbhak as long as possible comfortably. Then raise your chin (i. e., release Jalandhar bandh) and breath-out completely.
5. End of Bhastrika Pranayam.

## **Kapalbhati**

1. Sit in a pranayam position with straight spine and head down (chin is close to the collar bone) and maintain Shambavi Mudra for the entire duration of the pranayam.
2. Breath-in and breath-out once. Then inhale a little (just about 10% of the full breath) and expel the entire air with a burst (Dhakka or Jhatka) identical to Bhastrika.
3. Repeat this inhalation (10%) and breathing-out (complete) with Dhakka with a rhythm. Repeat this at least 10 times and increase it slowly. Try to practice it for at least 3 minutes. Continue to stay in Shambavi Mudra.
4. After the last Dhakka, inhale completely, breath-out completely, and hold your breath (Bahyya Kumbhak), keep your chin close to the collar bone (Jalandhar Bandh) and stay in Shambavi Mudra. Keep bahyya kumbhak as long as possible comfortably (this duration is usually less than the duration of Antarik Kumbhak). When you want to inhale then raise your chin (release Jalandhar bandh) and inhale completely.
5. End of Kapalbhati Pranayam.

### **Difference between Bhastrika and Kapalbhati**

1. In Bhastrika you inhale 50% of the full breath. In Kapalbhati you inhale only 10% of the full breath.
2. At the end, in Bhastrika you perform Antrik Kumbhak but in Kapalbhati you perform Bahyya Kumbhak.

## **Anulom-Wilom**

1. Sit in a pranayam position with straight spine and head down (chin is close to the collar bone). Maintain Shambavi Mudra for entire duration of pranayam.
2. Close your right nostril with the tip of the thumb and breath-in fully through the left nostril. Close the left nostril with the tip of your ring finger (anamika) and breath-out fully from your right nostril. Keep the left nostril closed and inhale fully through your right nostril. Close your right nostril, open the left nostril and breath-out through the left nostril. This completes one Matra (cycle). Continue to stay in Shambavi Mudra.
3. Practice at least 10 matras and continue to increase it slowly. You should try to practice this for at least 5 minutes. You must feel comfortable and relaxed. Always stay in Shambavi Mudra.
4. End of anulom-wilom Pranayam.

## **Sheetli**

1. Sit in a pranayam position and maintain Shambavi Mudra for entire duration of pranayam.
2. Breath-out completely through both nostrils. Role your tongue upward and make a small pipe like shape. Suck-in air fully with force through this tongue-pipe. The moisture in your mouth decreases the air temperature and produces a cool sensation in your throat. This is very refreshing. At the end of the inhalation make your tongue flat, bring it in, close your mouth and hold your breath (Antarik Kumbhak) as long as you can comfortably. Breath-

out through both nostrils completely. Do not forget to make the sound from the throat. This completes one Matra (cycle). Always stay in Shambavi Mudra.

3. Practice at least 15 matra and continue to increase it slowly. You should try to practice this for at least 5 minutes. You must feel comfortable relaxed. Always stay in Shambavi Mudra.
4. End of Sheetli Pranayam.

### **Important points to remember**

1. Pranayam is more of a mental process than physical. For this reason you should try to concentrate on OM or on your Isha Dev. If this concentration is missing then the benefit will be reduced.
2. Never overdo pranayam. This will affect your body and mind in a negative way. You must feel comfortable and practice your pranayam with utmost devotion. Your pranayam practice is the best puja you can offer to Bhagwaan.
3. You must develop respect and devotion towards any pranayam you do. It is a gift to you which will give you the power to improve your entire personality and cure the ailment, if you are suffering from any.
4. It is one the best helpers to our old age.

### **Benefits**

**Bhastrika and Kapalbhati** stimulate the liver that helps to reduce LDL and increases HDL. Note that any natural cure such as Pranayam takes time to work but the affect is permanent; they do not suppress the symptoms rather cure the ailment. They increase oxygen intake which increases lungs volume. They expel undesirable toxins from the lungs. A regular practice of these pranayams is important. Asthma is guaranteed to be cured through these pranayams.

**Anulom-Wilom** is an excellent nadi-shodhan pranayam. We will learn more about this in the class.

**Sheetli:** One of the best pranayam for curing hypertension and low blood pressure. You can check yourself its effect. Measure your blood-pressure before doing Sheetli. Practice Sheetli for about 3 minutes and measure the pressure. It will be significantly less than the pressure before the pranayam.

In the class we will have a question and answer session.