

# DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF PRANA FLOW IN YOGA

According to the yoga tradition, prana (life force) is fundamental to our life and function. Because of its essential nature, yogis had developed multiple ways of looking at different aspects of prana. Any physiological malfunction can be addressed through one or several of these models.

## Breathing Capacity and Ratios



Expanding our breathing capacity is vital to our health and well-being. The science of ratios helps us lengthen the inhalation and exhalation to expand our breathing capacity. It teaches us how to use the inhalation part of the breath to increase vitality and energize the system, and the exhalation part of the breath to calm down and become more stable and grounded.

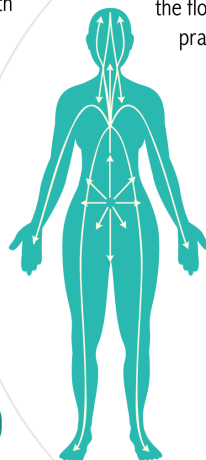
## Brhmana / Langhana Principles



Certain things in our systems need to be nourished and built up, while others need to be diminished or eliminated. Brhmana practices give us a chance to strengthen the things that we want to keep (vitality, confidence, positive outlook, etc.), while langhana practices help us get rid of stuff that we no longer need (imbalances, disease, anxiety, painful experiences, etc.)

## Pancha Vayu Model

Our physiological functioning is affected by the flow of prana along its five major currents: prana, apana, vyana, samana and udana.



This is much like the inner-workings of a very sophisticated engine. Prana brings in the fuel, Samana converts this fuel to energy, Vyana circulates the energy to the various work sites, Apana releases the waste materials or by products of the conversion process, Udana governs the positive energy created in the process and determines the work that the engine is able to do.

The physiological processes in the body (circulation, digestion, elimination, reproduction, immunity, etc) are governed by one or more vayas. By learning to work with the vayas we can get access to our physiology.

## Ida/Pingala (Nasal laterality)

Our energy balance is affected by the flow of energy along three major channels: ida, pingala and sushumna nadis.



Ida (lunar channel) is cooling and Pingala (solar channel) is heating. Ida terminates at the left nostril and Pingala at the right one. Stimulating one nostril will emphasize the qualities of that channel. When two sides are balanced, prana can enter the Central channel - Sushumna nadi -and travel upwards to the top of the head. Then eternal bliss (samadhi) is achieved.

Modern science confirms that the airflow shifts from one nostril to another about every 2 hours (called "infradian rhythm"). Right nostril breathing makes you more outwardly directed and vigorous, while left nostril breathing makes you more quiet and introspective.

## Bandhas

Bandha-s ("locks") are three specific practices meant to accelerate the action of transforming the human system.

When we are born there is nectar of life (amrta) contained in the "lake of the mind" located in the head. In the newborn it's full. At puberty a large quantity of this essence moves to the region of genitals, and we become fertile. The rest of amrta drips down slowly being consumed in the fire (in the navel region). Once all of the nectar is gone - our life ends.



Below the fire is the place where the impurities accumulate. Over time they poison our system and disturb prana. The goal of bandha practices is to lift the impurities toward the fire to burn them and also evaporate the descended essence to replenish the lake of mind.