

New Lamps for Old Gordon Smith

New lamps represent each new birth and the light a level of Consciousness that derives from a source called the Ancient of Days. Light has always been representative of Consciousness and stems from a Universal source that is both transcendent and imminent, and it is light as intelligence, clothed in matter, that transforms and characterises the world in which we live. The light in us is a gift of spirit and is that in us which knows we are here, having the ability to be 'Self' organising, make decisions and uniquely take part in the play of life that is all around. It is the desire for experience that takes us first down along one road and then another, when we discover that we are a part of a cosmic game, in which some lights appear to shine brighter than others. It is when we try to compensate by adopting the guise of the most successful, often seeking pleasure, and avoiding the difficult, that we appear to be something other than we truly are.

We exist within prisons of our own making, having confined ourselves within psychological barriers as defence from those who whether consciously or unconsciously try to harm us. We can either fight back or continue take refuge in fantasy worlds of our own making. These impositions veil the light of the Self within, so that we become shadows of our former selves, distorting our vehicle of experience, often becoming ill, prematurely abandoning our body and so losing the opportunity to further gain experience, and become unique centres of light and intelligence in the world of time.

Interest sustains life, and it is during periods of set back and ill health that we discover we still have a lot to live for and have not as yet reached our full potential. This is when we need to look clearly and objectively at the body of inertia we carry around with us and the attitudinal responses that disguise who we truly are.

When we are born we are unique to ourselves and bring with us unique vibrational patterning's developed through many lifetimes. This tempering process gained during life on earth, and passed on through the long body of the ancestors, occasionally gives rise to the age old question "Who Am I", and to ask ourselves, what is my purpose in life?, is it to be passive and subject to the winds of fate, or can work on myself, develop my full potential, and discover my true destiny.

It is the ancient art of Yoga that not only asks this question, but still passes on its experience developed through aeons of time, for those willing to study, learn and practise. There are many different forms of Yoga and paths to follow, all of which

lead back to centre and Self recognition, there is something for everyone, whatever one's nature or individual temperament.

Part II Essay 5

Describe and comment on lower, middle, upper and full breathing and give your personal comments.

In Sanskrit *pra* means 'first', *na* means 'vibration' and *an* means 'to breathe'. *Ayama* means 'to expand' and Pranayama therefore means expanding the dimension of prana. Prana is the fundamental vibratory life force that exists in all animal, mineral and vegetable elements, part of the air that we breathe but more subtle than oxygen and air, enlivening body, mind and soul and becomes apparent through awareness of the breath. As the fourth limb of Patanjali's eightfold path, pranayama controls the life force Prana and prepares us for meditation.

Prana connotes the soul as opposed to the body.

BKS Iyengar

The various techniques have specific benefits but all allow us to expand our limitations and attain a higher state which is in harmony with the universal energy flow. Pranayama enlivens the pranayama kosha and stimulates the nadis of the annamaya kosha which leads to mental and physical well-being. It is conscious breathing, a tool to strengthen control over the mind, and its practise allows us to become attuned to our relationship between our individuality and our universality, taking us from a constricted to an expanded state of awareness.

*When the Breath wanders, the mind is unsteady,
but when the Breath is still, so is the mind still.*

Hatha Yoga Pradipika

On a physical level pranayama improves physiological function by increasing lung capacity and releases acute and chronic tensions around the heart and digestive organs. It aids sufferers of respiratory illnesses such as asthma, emphysema to overcome the fear of shortness of breath and improves the auto immune system by increasing the distribution of energy to the endocrine system. Pranayama not only nourishes the body but also ensures waste elimination from cells via the blood plasma in the blood stream and out of the lungs. The vital energy released by pranayama exercises rejuvenates the physical and mental aspects of ourselves. The brain needs more oxygen than any other organ and a lack of oxygen affects our ability to cope under stress. Slowing and lengthening the breath engages the autonomic nervous system, stress is dissolved, and it aids digestion, rest absorption and healing to take

place. Proper breathing improves our ability to think and concentrate, to find emotional equilibrium, physical control and coordination.

Beginners may prefer to perfect the technique in Savasana where the spine is supported. It is important to stop if feeling out of your depth or panicked, allowing the lung capacity to increase gradually. Generally breathe in and out through the nose and avoid forced breathing. Whether lying, sitting or standing, always keep the spine stretched, the torso extended and the breastbone lifted. Develop the habit of watching yourself breathe and repeat each type of the three breaths independently until they are fluid and effortless.

The Lower (Abdominal) Breath

Place the right hand on the abdomen and the left hand on the chest. Exhale fully to empty the lungs, then inhale into the lower lungs so that the abdomen expands. Feel the abdomen rise and fall with each breath and repeat, keeping the breath even and relaxed. As the diaphragm moves down into the abdomen, drawing air into the lowest part of the lungs, the right hand will move up and the left will remain almost still. Focus on the upward movement of the abdomen and do not expand the ribcage.

More air is taken in with the lower breath due to greater movement of the lungs as the lower lobes have the greatest capacity. The diaphragm expands the base of the lungs, allowing them to suck in more venous blood, improving general circulation and the abdominal organs are massaged.

The Middle (Diaphragmatic / Thoracic) Breath

Place the hands on the sides of the ribcage level with the chest. Inhale into the lower lungs with expansion of the abdomen but continue to inhale into the middle lungs so that the ribcage rises and expands out to the sides. At this stage the intercostal muscles expand the ribcage and pull air into the middle part of the lungs. Concentrating on the sides of the chest, feel the movement of the individual ribs outward and upward. Exhale from the lower and then the middle lungs. Repeat, keeping the breath even and relaxed, the abdomen still and moving only the chest.

The diaphragm is the principal muscle that causes three-dimensional shape change in the thoracic and abdominal cavities and the middle breath oxygenates the blood supply to the liver, gall bladder, stomach, spleen and kidneys and pressure is taken off the heart.

The Upper (Clavicular) Breath

Place the hands on the collar bones, inhale into the lower lungs and then into the middle lungs. After the ribs are fully expanded, following the thoracic inhalation, continue to inhale into the upper lungs until you feel expansion around the base of the neck. The shoulders and collar bone move up slightly. Exhale from the lower, middle and finally upper lungs. Repeat, keeping the breath even and relaxed.

The upper breath strengthens the lymph nodes.

Another good way to learn these three breaths is to work with a partner, placing the hands on the seated partner's back to see and feel where the body rises and sinks on the inhalation and exhalation in relation to each breath. Alternatively, to feel where the breath should be expanding and contracting, lie in Savasana and for each respective breath, have the fingertips just touching on the abdomen, the ribcage and slightly below the collar bones, and notice the fingers separate on each inhalation and meet on each exhalation.

The Full Yogic Breath

Dirgha, the full yogic breath, is the smooth and regular combination of the lower, middle and upper breaths and fills all areas of the lungs in a continuous flow without using the hands. Exhale from the bottom up and never rush or strain. A count of 2-2-2 to fill lower, middle and upper lungs is very helpful for beginners. Progress to 5 second retention and suspension to encourage the body to take up prana fully.

Pooraka – inhalation

We invite God inside

Antar kumbhaka – internal breath retention

Pray to God to remain within

Rechaka – exhalation

Pray that God removes impurities

Bahir kumbhaka – external breath retention

Surrender ourselves to the feet of our God

The full breath creates calm breathing which is cleansing and restorative and has a relaxing and releasing effect. It can be practised before or after asanas and before or as part of relaxation and before meditation. It sequentially directs our attention from the diaphragm, to the ribs and to the clavicles. It is good for stressful situations and anger as the longer exhalations are calming and can be practised anywhere.

Contraindications are heart conditions, blood pressure problems and pregnancy, although the full breath may be performed gently without breath retention or suspension. Initially, the aim is to strengthen the lungs and balance the nervous and pranic systems. The quality of the breath is vital – it should be controlled, smooth and even, and it should be modified if it feels or sounds uneven or harsh.

Breathing is absolutely essential to life as we cannot live without it, but most of us only use a fraction of our lung capacity which in turn prevents us from reaching our full potential.

Those who only half breathe, only half live.

Those who breathe fully, live fully.

CYF Teachers Training manual

The true value of pranayama is being conscious of the breath so that our awareness stays centred in the midst of turbulence. By learning the full yogic breath we discover how to control our bodies and our minds and it is the basis for all the other different types of yoga breathing and should be mastered before moving on to any of them. Use the full yogic breath when feeling pressure and strain to circulate the life force throughout the body; finding the stillness in the spaces between the breaths which is wonderfully peaceful. By becoming accustomed to full breathing we can observe and correct our breathing and learn to become the watcher in this respect.

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CYF Training Day Handout – First Year, Unit 1

CYF Teacher Training Manual II

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*Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy.
They are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.*

Marcel Proust (submitted by Lisa Russell)

Test Paper Questions Two: Sam Wiltshire

1. **How do you think Yoga will help improve the condition of a patient with a heart condition: include in your answer specific areas of Yoga activity which may help?**

A patient with a heart condition will be recommended by their doctors to engage in a heart healthy diet and lifestyle. Yoga can benefit greatly for it will involve exercising the body in such a way as to not put strain on the heart but to encourage it to 'work out' at a comfortable level. Those with heart conditions are generally encouraged to engage in physical activity, but such that it is gentle. For instance, even patients recovering from by-pass surgery are kept in hospital for the minimum time and set off as soon as is seen safe with a programme of gentle daily movement/exercise to begin to help their heart back to a healthy recovery.

We want our heart to be exercised but not strained. Those who have heart conditions will also be advised to reduce stressful activity and that which makes them feel agitated or anxious. Yoga will equip them with skills to not only reduce their stress levels during the yoga practice but ways to use the techniques in everyday life where stress, agitation and anxieties arise. Breathing techniques and visualisation are powerful ways to calm the mind, calm the body. Deep abdominal breathing helps blood circulation and reduces the amount the heart has to work, helping to bring about a calm mind and body. By lowering blood pressure, increasing lung capacity, boosting circulation and muscle tone and improving respiratory function yoga will improve the overall well being - contributing to a heart healthy body.

Also it should be mentioned that those having experienced heart surgery have put their bodies through trauma and it is common to suffer symptoms of trauma such as varying states of depression, anxiety, even grieving the life (style) once lived, as it may be that they are advised to make lifestyle changes. Yoga can again help people facing these emotional difficulties process them by calming and relaxing the mind and putting them into a more positive mind-set.

Adopt gentle, supported posture work – Tadasana, Ardha Chakrasana, Vajrasana, (gentle) Bhujangasana, the Pavanmukta series and gentle leg raises, supporting your back with hands placed under lower torso. Spine lengthening poses promote good posture to reduce compression on the heart and lungs and to facilitate proper functioning of the heart. Also of benefit is practice of pranayama such as full yogic breath, Ujjayi pranayama, Anulom Vilom (avoiding retention). Savasana relaxation and yoga nidra are powerfully calming and positive forms of stress relief and those with heart conditions.

Though there are differing types of heart disease, pranayama is effective for all as it simultaneously improves blood circulation and calms.

Lastly yoga may also address existing weight or health issues, bringing down any excess weight, which would put strain on the heart muscle and contribute to heart disease. Though it is not inevitable, regular yoga practice can have an impact on other parts of your life – diet, lifestyle, attitudes to stress etc. all of which can have a positive impact on the heart.



Awakening to love is what I am doing each morning.
I love stretching my mind and acting as if I am already
whole and complete, right here and right now.

My heart is open and receptive to all good as I let go of
striving and straining to get what I need.
I know that everything I need and desire comes from the
perfect time space sequence.

I feel peaceful knowing that the Universe is on my side.
As I align my consciousness with my higher self I flow with
an attitude of serendipity through all kinds of experiences.



Brahman: an excerpt from an essay by new trainee teacher Gill Drummond.

I wrote my first Philosophy essay for my teacher training course whilst I was on holiday in the south of France, where I going swimming along the bay every day (weather permitting) – some days I got quite a battering from the waves. Initially I found the concept of Brahman quite difficult to comprehend. My tutor Deb Auden really liked the way I finally got myself to understand Brahman.

The CYF teacher training material told me...

“Filled with Brahman are the things we see. Filled with Brahman are the things we see not. From out of Brahman floweth all that is – from Brahman all!” then went to mention the idea of a droplet of water dropping into a larger pool of water – the small droplet appears to vanish in the large pool (i.e. we no longer see the smaller droplet), but we do see the large pool of water.

Going swimming in the sea gives me time to think.

It was on one swim along the bay, when the concept Brahman seemed to become clear to me: my physical body is swimming in the sea when I wave crashes over me; I swallow water, so the sea is inside me. Think of this as Brahman what is both inside me and surrounding me. The sea that surrounds me is a part of our planet and our planet is a part of our universe – I am united via the sea with the universe. Thinking Fundamental Unity and Prana, this became clearer too: if my lungs fill with the sea water, I can no longer breathe and my physical body dies.

This we know.

The earth does not belong to man;
man belongs to the Earth.

This we know.

All things are connected like blood
which unites one family.

Whatever befalls the Earth befalls
the sons of the Earth.

Man did not weave the web of life;
he is merely a strand in it.

Whatever he does to the web, he
does to himself.

Chief Seattle