

Samedi 29 Octobre 2022

PRANAYAMA



1• Shavasana

Laying down with bent legs maintain the length and the width back/ front/ sides.



Release watchfully, catching the edges of the mat, stretching one leg at the time in a gradual process > not to pull the trunk towards the thighs by relaxing at once.



Front thighs have gradually to lengthen. Lower back long, abdomen soft. Balance the lengthening of the back and of the front thighs.



Ex: lying down, if I over-extend the back, my legs cannot go completely down and release, because of the posterior tilt in the pelvis. This is keeping my thighs tense, my abdomen gripped. This is another extreme (the most common being to shorten the lower back to release the legs).

Allowing the back to lengthen, you should be able to relax / lengthen your legs as well.

Let's look for that sensitivity to create balance in the front / and the back edge. Proceed...

Observe how you are able to spread on the floor. Try to sense / feel the touch of the floor on the back, how the back edge connects to the floor. Find out if the back edge is completely spread and placed on the floor; if the back skin feels restful.

From shoulder towards the elbow towards the wrist release your arms

Same with the legs, release. Thighs, outer calves should not feel stuck on the mat.

Head/ neck supported on the blanket should bring softness in the throat region.

Facial muscles relaxed. Throat relaxed.

Feel the shoulders relaxed towards the floor. The shoulder blades slightly descend away from the neck. It is a subtle action.

(If you overdo it will disturb the spinal column by kicking the dorsal)

It is only the shoulder blades descending down.

While the trapezius lengthens, release your arms, upper arms rolling inside out, palms turning towards the thumb side.

Release – let go of any effort/grip gradually...

Find out if your exhalations help you to release, let loose. It has to bring softness.

Do not force yourself to breathe fuller or deeper. Let the breath become stable.

In your inhalations, see if you experience the softness throughout.

As you exhale, release, let loose any area where there is tightness.

Stay. Observe that quiet and relaxed state. [...]

As you find yourself settled in that pose, observe the way your breath is happening, its pace,.

Just witness that breath. Observe the pattern. [...]

Whenever you feel, you will gradually come out of that Shavasana...

•2 Shavasana

Place a folded blanket under the buttocks > to facilitate the spreading of the back.



Observe what brings that slight elevation of the pelvis. Just settle down in that position.

The blanket brings a gentle lift of the pelvis, not too thick, not touching the lower back. We want a minimum lift: Shavasana of the mildest form of Setu Bandha Sarvangasana.

Observe its effect on the breath, the small changes. Nothing to work hard to achieve.

Make sure you do not get carried away in a wrong dynamic of effort. We want the sensitivity, softness in the breath as you inhale / exhale. Right from the nostrils into the throat, chest and the abdomen, no friction with the breath: softness throughout.

– Ujjayi I

As you settle down, watch how your inhalation is felt towards the lower abdomen - softness in the abdomen will allow your inhalations to reach there. Witness the breath reaching the lower abdomen. If your back is tense/ gripped for any reason, that tension will reflect in the abdomen. The abdomen must remain softer and for that, the lower back must remain restful.

If you the back is having some strain, stay with bent legs; then lift the buttocks, remove the blanket, make it thinner, and replace it under your pelvis. That thinner layer should help the back settle down. Check if you are not overextending the lumbar and pushing the buttocks down too much. Observe the inhalations spreading in the lower abdomen, experience the softness there.

[...]

Turn on the R side. Gradually open the eyes...

That subtle elevation changed the flow of the breath. Did you notice that? Did you feel a better access to the abdominal region?

Often we do have to work for the chest opening, because of our habitual collapse there, and the instructions are given to place the upper back, the shoulders, lift the chest...

Along with all that, you have to make sure that the abdomen remains softer. The freedom to have the flow for the inhalation, should exist in the abdomen.

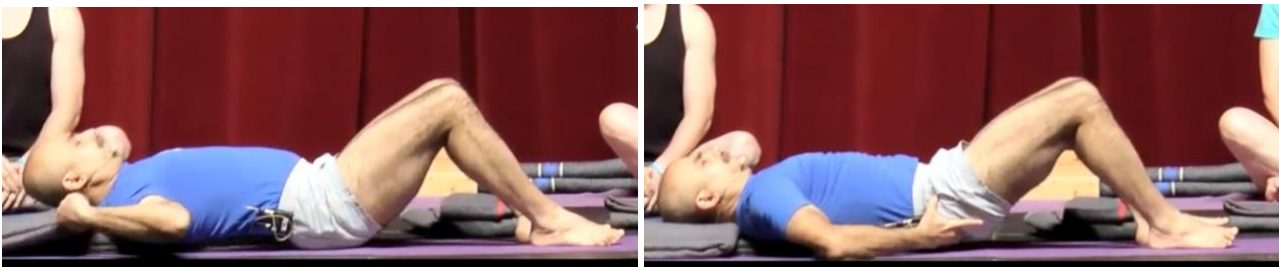
Often in order to sit upright, get that opening, we tense the abdomen walls, and that creates a restriction/limitation for the breath. [It will not restrict the volume, but obviously it will be limited. It is not the aim right now to use the volume of your breath.]

We have to make sure there is softness that encourages the flow of the breath. Any strong effort is going to create tightness/grip and block that flow for that spread.

That slight elevation should enable the breath to spread in the abdominal region.

• 3 Shavasana

Three folded blanket for spine support. Find the even inner edge > to support the back. A 2nd blanket to support the head/neck. Extra blanket will go on top of your thighs.



That edge gradually will support the lumbar/sacrum. As you lie down, release the buttocks away, separate the buttocks from the center, so that they settle on the floor, the lower back has a comfortable support: this is where the support should be (sacrum), then release the legs one by one, arms restful on the sides. Shavasana once again...



With that narrow support for your back, see that you lengthen the spinal column properly and rest it on the support. That lengthening process should bring in release, not a stretch feel.

[...]

– Ujjayi II

As you are comfortably placed over there, we will proceed for slightly prolonged watchful exhalations. This is where we will have a little bit of control/exercise on that breath. We will have a slight control on it. It should not create any grip or tightness.

You will have a normal inhalation, it is only that exhalation that will have a slightly reduced pace. That change should be so subtle, so little, that it does not bother you / make you eager for the next inhalation.

That slight change will make your breath / exhalation happen a little longer. That extra bit of length should still remain comfortable. And as you go for that exhalation, see that it happens completely... and then, you receive the following inhalation. [...]

> Those who are used to it can go for a few continuous cycles, may be 3, 4, 5... It is not about the count, but about maintaining that softness, that relaxed state, where you can observe a slightly prolonged exhalation...

> Others, may be just attempt one cycle of watchful exhalation, a few normal cycles in between, so that quiet relaxed state is not compromised.

That relaxed feel has to continue, even if you have to work with the breath. [...]

Then let go for a while. Allow the breath happen normally.

– Ujjayi III

We're going for slightly prolonged watchful inhalations: now the tricky part here is: as we go for a slightly prolonged breath we want to breathe in a little longer > there could be a temptation of breathing excessively and going for the deepest possible breath. That attempt to breathe in deeper can introduce /invite grips on the facial region, in the intercostal muscles, in the chest region, even in the abdomen.

So we have to be cautious and watchful about maintaining that softness, and within that boundary, that limit, where the softness can be insured, we will go for a little prolonged inhalation.

The exhalation will happen, we'll have to breathe out completely; when the inhalation starts, there is a slight, slow pace where we receive the breath – so slight refined stream is received – this will take a little longer, but length should not create desperation, eagerness to just complete and exhale out at once.

Face relaxed, throat passive, again those who are used to practice, you can go for a few more cycles one after the other. Just notice you have the softness, and that comfortable state is not compromised...

The volume of the breath should not create that tightness /grip /effort. Find out the range which is comfortable for your own self.

That needs alertness, that ability to focus within. This is the kind of effort that we need here. Which is more a mental effort, with no physical effort going into it. Whenever it starts to go towards this physical effort side, even before you notice that starting, you can discontinue and go for normal cycles.

You can let go for a while. [...]

Gently bend your arms, bend your legs, roll to the right, remove the blanket. Once again, lie down on the plain mat. Allow the back once again feel the even floor. If necessary take a blanket for the neck and the head. "Necessary" means: if it is creating tightness in the throat, take that blanket. Otherwise, place it on your thighs.

We no longer trying to watch and focus on the breath. It should be comfortable lying down on the floor now. This lying down should you give you the chance to rest and stay there quiet for a while. The mind which was working to carry out / continue with that focus, that faculty to have your focus on the breath, let it go and rest as well.

Be restful physically, even the mind can just go quiet. Tongue restful on the lower palate, jaws relaxed, throat relaxed, let the breath happen on its own. Without any friction. Just be quiet for a while. [...]

Bend your arms, bend your legs, turn to the side, with the support of your left hand, gradually come up.



• Q: – Did you feel that lying down was beyond your capacity to stay quiet on the floor ? On the plain mat... did it start to feel a little restless towards the end? [Yes: a few people] ...

That restlessness, if it starts to set in, we have to be watchful about that, because that is the fatigue which sets in. It's not the fatigue like in Trikonasana or Virabhadrasana II, where you get exhausted and you have to just come out. You are lying down, there is no physical effort. But just being able to lie down and stay restful, even that capacity has to be developed over period.

We have to practice the restorative poses in order to increase that capacity. And it will improve gradually, where you will be able to lie down for a little longer, and that is going to enable us to pay more attention, give more time to observe the breath. Otherwise the breath, again – it's easy, we all breathe and that's why we are here, breathing will continue and happen whether we pay attention to it or not. If it doesn't happen, the discussion also doesn't need to happen (!)

So when we sit and continue with the breath we automatically go into that physical / muscular action more than breathing. Whatever the pranayama pattern, we have to have the sensitivity to notice what the flow is like: prolonging, refining the minute stream, whether it is inwards or outwards, it has to happen without that effortful feel.

And that needs that own practice / time to evolve. In a way it is a little tougher, for some of us even more difficult, because the physical movement you can go on with it, you can focus and carry out that movement. For certain postures we are compelled to remain focused – poses like Virabhadrasana III, or any of the balancings; It is easy to get the focus while it is challenging physically.

The physical challenge is not here at all. We are even insured that we have those minimum support and that we are not getting challenged physically. And that should enable us to focus on the breath. And from there we gradually start building this ability to focus / to observe, and that's how the pranayama practice can build further. Otherwise, like Prashantji says: it is "shvasayam" that we just go on with: it is just "breath gymnastics" – which may have its own benefit to some extent, but it's again something which is done on the physical level. For us to proceed further on the pranayama / pratyahara direction, we have to get over that effort for this sake.

