



Know your breath and its unique characteristics in Āsana

"Know your breath and its unique characteristics within Āsana and you will have an initial template for working with your breath in Prāṇāyāma."

Modern postural Yoga talks a lot about individual patterning from our genetic past, along with upbringing and lifestyle conditioning, determining what body patterns we inherently carry from life to death.

From this, how we need to consider what body we bring to Āsana practice and how we need to be intelligent in our choice of Āsana for our body and mind and the developmental direction of our body in Āsana practice.

Less talked about is that exactly the same can be said for our breath and the individual patterning from our genetic past, along with upbringing and lifestyle conditioning, determining what breathing patterns we inherently carry from life to death.

From this, we also need to consider what breath we bring to Āsana practice and how we need to be intelligent in our choice of breathing patterns in Āsana for our body (and mind) and the developmental direction of our breath in Āsana practice.

In the same way we also need to investigate not just how our unique patterning in our body affects how we sit for Prāṇāyāma but especially how our unique patterning in our breath affects how we breathe in Prāṇāyāma.

We could also suggest that the body is a relatively fixed or gross aspect in looking at the transition from Āsana to Prāṇāyāma.

The inquiry into the breath is another level altogether when it comes to our observation and investigation into how its individualised nuances and conditionings affects our choices for focus, direction and developmental possibilities.

In terms of the relationship between, and transition from, Āsana to Prāṇāyāma the breath is more important and ultimately more complex than the body. For example, technically we could always sit on a chair for Prāṇāyāma, but still we have to contend with that unique respiratory/energetic matrix inherent in each of our breath 'bodies'.

Accordingly in the early days of Āsana practice the feedback that arises from the observation of the individual students breathing patterns regarding the length, character and individualised conditioning of the breath within Āsana guides the student and/or their teacher in setting priorities and direction within Prāṇāyāma.

Progressively, as the student establishes themselves in the practice of Prāṇāyāma, the feedback that arises from the observation of the individual students unique breathing patterns regarding the length, character and individualised conditioning of the breath within Prāṇāyāma, guides the student and/or their teacher in setting priorities and direction within Āsana.

*Know your breath and
its unique characteristics within Prāṇāyāma
and you will have a developmental template
for re-working with your breath in Āsana.*

In other words the nuances of the breath in Āsana guide us in our initial possibilities, and in setting beginning levels for directional priorities in Prāṇāyāma.

As we continue to investigate the breath in Prāṇāyāma the discoveries we make regarding our strengths and issues re-inform our current choice of Āsana, and breathing patterns in those Āsana, in terms of setting priorities in how we can our Āsana practice to work at freeing and then transcending our respiratory and energetic blockages.

From a personal viewpoint I came to discover that a side effect of choosing in 1974 to reset my priorities in terms of investigating the breath in Āsana over the body in Āsana facilitated a freedom in Āsana that remains with me, even as my body inevitably ages.

However this is a freedom that is not measurable in terms such as range of joint movement or muscle strength.

This is the teaching of Krishnamacharya and Desikachar in relation to Āsana and Prāṇāyāma practice for adults. It was actualised through the Viniyoga of Yoga or the teaching of Yoga developed according to the individual student's responses.

As such it was different from the priorities they set in, say teaching to groups of children and young adults.