

# THE EIGHT CLASSICAL PRANAYAMAS

By

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**Yoga Vidya**, the science of Yoga, was traditionally kept secret. This secrecy had a **two-fold purpose**: to **protect the sanctity** of the Science from the profane mind and to **protect the profane mind from the power** of this science. Our sages realised that this knowledge was like a fire, which could, if properly used, transform the practitioner. However, it could also burn and destroy those not skilled or evolved enough to use it wisely. Just as a small child is protected from and warned about the danger of fire till he matures enough to understand its use, so also the immature spiritual seeker is protected from higher knowledge till he has the skill to use it wisely.

Classical **Yoga Vidya** was **always** taught in an intimate Guru-Chela relationship. **“From the mouth of the Guru to the ear of the student.”** Sacred teachings **were not written down** thousands of years ago. Instead, they were **orally transmitted**, then **memorised**, and **then, actualized and realised**.

Rishi Valmiki is acclaimed as the Adhi Kavi, or the “First Poet.” He wrote the **RAMAYANA** in a style known as **Shlokas**. This masterpiece of spiritual instruction, perhaps written seven thousand years ago, was an epic of heroic nature, encompassing the spiritual values of the ancient Sanathana Dharma culture within the story of the life of Lord Rama, King of Ayodhya, and his wife Queen Sita. Rishi Veda Vyasa, who is thought to have lived about five thousand years ago, was the real “Codifier” of the culture, ethos, life style, spiritual values and spiritual heritage of the race of people now known as “the Hindus.” He organised, wrote down, and systematized the **Vedas**, the **Puranas**, and the **Upanishads**. He composed the great epic **MAHABHARATA**, within which the great jewel of sparking spiritual illumination, **THE BHAGAVAD GITA**, is contained. All these great spiritual heritages are illumined with the spiritual attitudes of **Yoga**, in the highest definition of the word-“**Union of the individual soul (Jiva) with the Highest (Paramatma)**”.

However, specific references to **Yoga** as a methodical, systematic approach to cultivating the spiritual experience occur for the first time in an extensive manner in the **Yoga Sutras** of Maharishi Patanjali, which is dated about 600-800 B.C. by Hindu Scholars. Western Scholars often put Patanjali’s date much later. Patanjali used only 196 Sutras (very short, anagrammatic statements) to codify the whole process of the Yoga Science. Yet, his work is not a manual of instructions. It is only a very subtle reminder of principles, which would already have been grasped by those who heard or read his work. Only those already initiated into the concepts and practices of Yoga would be able to understand what he had written.

**HATHA YOGA PRADIPIKA** authored by Swatmarama Suri, is one of the oldest extant written texts of practical instructions on **Hatha Yoga** and **Raja Yoga** practices in Sanskrit.

Yet, it is dated only about 500 to 800 years ago. Even this text is highly ambiguous in its description and obviously, is not intended to be an instruction manual. It is more or less a compilation of concepts, designed to order the knowledge and to hint at its practice. Swatmarama Suri clearly assumed that those studying this text would be under the guidance of a Guru. In fact he often cautions: **“These practices should be kept secret”**... and **“These techniques should be practiced only under the guidance of a Guru.”** His work was definitely no substitute for contact with a living Master. As he says in the first Verse of Chapter Two, which is devoted to Pranayama: **“The Yogi, having perfected himself in the Asanas, should practice Pranayama according to the instruction of his Guru, with his senses under control, conforming to a moderate and beneficial diet”**.

After describing general Pranayama techniques and the Shat Karmas, the Six Acts of Cleansing (**Dhauti, Basti, Neti, Trataka, Nauli and Kapalabhati**) he explains the eight Pranayamas. He normally uses the word **“Kumbhaka”** to describe Pranayama.

The eight **“Kumbhakas”** according to Swatmarama Suri are: **Surya Bhedana, Ujjayi, Sitkari, Sitali, Bhastrika, Brahmari, Murccha and Plavini.**

Many modern devotees of Yoga, hampered by the lack of contact with a living Guru, forced to pick up bits and pieces of Yogic knowledge whenever they can find it, or gleaning information from modern Yoga books, are severely handicapped in their Sadhana by a misunderstanding of the scope of Pranayama. Many modern practitioners believe that there are only eight classical Pranayamas, and base their arguments on the text **HATHA YOGA PRADIPIKA**, which is, after all, a “recent text” in the context of the tens of thousands of years of the Hindu spiritual, cultural and Yogic experience. **Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj**, one of the leading authorities of Ashtanga Yoga in the twentieth century, and the lineage holder of the Bengali Tantric Yoga tradition passed to him by his Guru **Yogamaharishi Swami Kakananda Brighu**, taught 120 Pranayama techniques.

Ancient Sanskrit sources proclaim that Pranayama is a “holy science” leading to inner spiritual development. *“Prana is the fundamental basis of whatever is, was, and will be.”* (**Atharvaveda XI, IV, 10:XI, IV, 15**) *“Pranayama is a technique bringing under control all that is connected with Prana (Vital Force).* (**Vishnu Puranam, VI, VII, 40**) Whatever our source, the ancient Rishis all agree that there is a vital energy called **“Prana”**, and that it can be controlled, **“Ayama.”** The science of this control is **“Pranayama”**.

In Yoga it is demonstrated that man has at least five bodies, the **Pancha Kosha**, of which the second body is the **Pranamaya Kosha**. This **Pranamaya Kosha** is the Vital Body, the dynamic, or the sheath composed of breath-life. Pranayama must be understood as a “science of more than breath control.” This science may begin with techniques regulating the breath, but later, it leads to much more subtle **Prakriyas** than the simple regulation of air.

Ordinary day-to-day breathing by the Jiva, or soul, embodied in an **Annamaya Kosha**, the physical body, is largely an automatic process governed by the lower brain, the reptilian complex. In Yoga Pranayama the breathing function is taken over by the higher brain, the Neo-Cortex, which is used by the conscious mind. Both autonomic and conscious breath have two distinct aspects : one, which is termed as outer respiration and the other, as inner respiration. The terms **“Bahira”** for “outer”, and **“Antara”** for “inner” respiration are used by

Yogis to explain the difference between autonomic and conscious breath. In this sense they take on an additional esoteric meaning and value.

For the neophyte, the practice of Yoga begins with the control of the breathing mechanism and the crude aspects of respiration or moving air in and out of the lungs, while the inner aspects of Pranayama become a concern only for the advanced Yogi.

### THREE CLASSIFICATIONS OF PRANAYAMA

**According to Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda all Pranayama may be classified into three divisions.**

1. **YOGA PRANAYAMAS, the ADHAMAS.** These Pranayamas are basically physical breath exercises or controls for correcting breathing difficulties, which may interfere with normal good health and the development of higher phases of Yoga. These techniques are also essential for cleansing and purifying the respiratory tract, the lungs, the blood stream and the various organs of the body, for toning up the nervous system and for strengthening the mind. Therefore, they cover a range, which could be considered to be one of general health of both a physical and psychological nature, as well as a form of internal hygiene.
2. **SAMYAMA PRANAYAMAS, the MADHYAMAS.** These Pranayamas are used as an introspective means to attain to sensory control, sensory withdrawal, concentration and meditation. “**Samyama**” represents the whole scope of the “**Antaranga**” of Raja Yoga, so the use of these Pranayama cannot be minimized for those who wish to attain to the middle or higher stages of Yogic development.
3. **SHAKTI PRANAYAMAS, the UTTANAS.** These higher Pranayamas are for powerful Prana / Shakti arousal and its control, and represent the most potent form of Yogic stimulation. The actual techniques to arouse Kundalini Shakti are jealously guarded by the Masters of Laya Yoga or those who follow the path of **Dakshina Marga**, the Right Hand Tantra Path.

**NOTE:** In adhering to this triune grouping, Pranayama follows all the other phases of Yoga. In these three phases we find the cleansing the building up and the rejuvenation and leveling, and the same theme could be applied to the concept of the Trigunic nature of Tamas, Rajas and Sattva.

### THE FOUR FUNCTIONS OF BREATH

At least four distinct functions are seen to be associated with breathing. These are the in taking of atmospheric air, the suspension of the taken breath, the expiration of body gases on the outgoing breath and in some cases, a hiatus of the breath, which can be controlled as a suspension of breathing. In **Srimad Bhagavad Gita** these four phases are referred to as: **Prana** (in); **Vidharana** (held in); **Prachch’hardana** (out), and **Apana** (held out). The usual terms in Yoga for these four-fold functions are: **Puraka** (in); **Kumbhaka** (held in); **Rechaka** (out); and **Shunyaka** (held out). Further sub-divisions of this breathing cycle are a natural suspension of the held-in breath, **Kevala Abhyantara** and the natural suspension of the held-out breath. **Kevala Kumbhaka**, which also suggests the natural **Shunya** or **Sahaja** state of

the breath. **Sahita Kumbhaka** and **Shunya Kumbhaka** are terms, which are used to explain a controlled, held-out breath as opposed to the **Sahaja** or **Kevala Kumbhaka**.

#### FOUR ASPECTS OF PRANAYAMA

FUNCTION	GITA TERMS	CONVENTIONAL TERMS	OTHER TERMS
1. In breath	Prana	Puraka	
2. Held in	Vidharana	Kumbhaka	Abhyantara
3. Out breath	Prachch'hardana	Rechaka	
4. Held out	Apana	Shunyaka	Shunya Sahaja Bahya Kevala Kumbhaka Sahita Kumbhaka

#### THE EIGHT CLASSICAL PRANAYAMAS WITH REFERENCE TO THE HATHA YOGA PRADIPIKA AND GHERANDA SAMHITA

The eight classical Pranayamas are very briefly and generally described in the **HATHA YOGA PRADIPIKA**. Six of these eight are also briefly described in the **Gheranda Samhita**. The descriptions are obviously not intended to be instructions, but rather reminders to those who have already been initiated into the practices by their Guru. The eight classical Pranayama will now be described with reference to the **Hatha Yoga Pradipika** and the **Gheranda Samhita**.

#### SITKARI PRANAYAMA

Sitkari is described in **Chapter Two of Hatha Yoga Pradipika** :

**Verse 54** : “Then Sitkari (is described) Make a hissing sound with the mouth (while inhaling air) and exhale only through the nostrils. By the Yoga consisting of repeated practice of this, one becomes a second god of beauty (Kamadeva)”

**Verse 55** : “He becomes an object of high regard amongst the circles of Yogins; he is able to create and destroy; neither hunger, nor thirst, somnolence or indolence arise (in him).”

**Verse 56** : “By this practice strength of body is gained, and the Lord of Yogins, becomes surely free of afflictions of every kind on this earthly sphere.

(Gheranda Samhita does not describe Sitkari Pranayama)

### SITALI PRANAYAMA

**Verse 57 Chapter Two of Hatha Yoga Pradipika:** “Then Sitali (is described) (Protruding the tongue a little outside the lips) Inhale with the tongue (curled up to resemble a bird’s beak) and perform Kumbhaka as before. Then the intelligent (practitioner) should slowly exhale the air through the nostrils.”

**Verse 58:** This Kumbhaka named Sitali destroys diseases of the abdomen and spleen and also fever, biliousness, hunger, thirst, and (the bad effects of) poisons.”

**Gheranda Samhita devotes two verses to Sitali Pranayama in Chapter Four:**

**Verse 73:** Draw in the air through the mouth (with the lips and tongue thrown out) and fill the stomach slowly. Retain it there for a short time. Then exhale it through both the nostrils.

**Verse 74:** Let the Yogi always practise this Sitali Kumbhaka, giver of bliss. By doing so he will be free from indigestion, phlegm and bilious disorders.

### BRAHMARI PRANAYAMA

**HATHA YOGA PRADAPIKA :**

**Verse 68 :** Chapter Two : “Here Bhramari is described. Breathing in rapidly with a resonance resembling the sound of a bee, exhale slowly, making the humming sound of a female bee. By the Yoga, which consists in practicing thus, there arises an indescribable bliss in the hearts of the best amongst the Yogins.”

**Gheranda Samhita Fifth Chapter :**

**Verse 78 :** At past midnight in a place where there are no sounds of any animals, to be heard, let the Yogi practice Puruka and Kumbhaka, closing the ears by the hands.

**Verse 79-80 :** He will then hear various internal sounds in his right ear. The first sound will be like crickets, then that of a lute, then that of thunder, then that of a drum, then that of a beetle, then that of bells, then that of gongs of bell-medal, trumpets, kettle-drums, maidongs, military drums etc.

**Verse 81-82 :** Thus, various sounds are cognised by daily practice of this Kumbhaka. Last of all is heard the Anahata sound rising from the heart. Of this sound there is resonance. In that resonance is light. In that light the mind should be immersed. When mind is absorbed, then it reaches the highest seat of Vishnu – By success in this Bhramari Kumbhaka, one gets success in Samadhi.

## BHASTRIKA PRANAYAMA

### Hatha Yoga Pradipika

**Verse 59, Chapter Two:** *“Then Bhastrika: When the two feet are placed upon (opposite) thighs, that is the Padmasana which destroys all ill effects.”*

**Verse 60-61:** *Having assumed Padmasana properly, with the neck and abdomen in line, the intelligent (practitioner) should close the mouth and breathe out the air through the nostrils with effort, till it is felt to resound in the heart, throat and up to the skull. Then air should be inhaled rapidly till it touches the lotus of the heart.*

**Verse 62-63:** *Again he should exhale in the same manner and inhale thus again and again. Even as the blacksmith works his bellows with speed, he should with his mind, keep the Prana in his body (constantly) by moving. When tiredness is felt in the body, he should breathe in by right nostril.*

**Verse 64:** *After the interior of the body is quickly filled with air, the nose should be closed tightly with the thumb, the ring finger, and the little finger.*

**Verse 65:** *Having performed as prescribed, the breath should be exhaled through the left nostril. This removes (disorders rising from) excess of wind, bile and phlegm and increases the (digestive) fire in the body.*

*(A variation described in **Jyotsna of Brahmananda** translated in 1893 by Srinivasa Iyyengar. Says: Bhastrika Kumbhaka should be thus performed: press the left nostril with the ring and little fingers, and by right nostril, inhale and exhale like a pair of bellows. When tired perform Kumbhaka, inhaling by the right nostril and exhaling by the left. Then press the right nostril and inhale and exhale through the left nostril. Thus go on alternatively until tired. This is one method. The other way of practicing it is to close the left nostril and inhale as much as possible by the right nostril, quickly close that nostril, and then exhale gradually through the left nostril. This should be done many times and when feeling tired, one should inhale through the right nostril, perform Kumbhaka and exhale through the left nostril. Then this should be done for the other nostril.)*

**Verse 66:** *This rouses the Kundalini quickly and is purifying, pleasant and beneficial. It removes obstructions caused by phlegm, that exist at the mouth of Sushumna.*

*(Comments from **Jyotsna** : Suryabhedana and Ujjaya generate heat. Sitkari and Sitali are cool. Bhastrika preserves an equable temperature. Suryabhedana primarily controls excess of wind; Ujjayi, phlegm, Sitkari and Sitali, bile, and Bhastrika, all three.)*

**Verse 67 :** *This Kumbhaka called Bhastrika should be specially practised, as it enables (the breath) to break through the three knots (granthis) that are firmly placed in Sushumna.*

### Chapter Five: Gheranda Samhita

**Verse 75:** *As the bellows of the Iron Smith constantly dilates and contracts let him slowly draw the air by both nostrils and expand the stomach. Then throw it out quickly (the wind making a sound) like the bellows.*

*Verse 76-77: Having thus inspired and expired quickly twenty times, let him perform Kumbhaka, and then let him expel it by the previous method. Let the wise one perform this Bhastrika (bellows like) Kumbhaka: he will never suffer any disease and will always be healthy.*

## **MURCCHA PRANAYAMA**

**HATHA YOGA PRADAPIKA: Chapter Two Verse 69 :** *Then Murccha is described. At the end of inhalation, very firmly assuming Jalandhara Bandha, exhale breath slowly. This is called “Murccha” as it reduces the mind to a state of inactivity and confers happiness.*

**Gheranda Samhita: Chapter Five V.7 :** *Having performed Kumbhaka with comfort, let him withdraw the mind from all objects and fix it in the space between the eyebrows. This causes fainting of mind and gives happiness. For, by this joining the Manas with the Atma, the bliss of Yoga is certainly obtained.*

## **SURYA BHEDANA**

**Verse 48. Chapter Two: Hatha Yoga Pradipika:** *Then Surya Bhedana is described. Assuming an Asana on a comfortable seat, the Yogi should slowly draw the air outside through the right Nadi (Pingala)*

**Verse 49:** *Then he should practise Kumbhaka, restraining the breath to the utmost till it is felt from the hair (on the head) to the ends of the nails (in the toes, that is, pervading the whole body). Then, he should slowly exhale through the left Nadi (Ida)*

**Verse 50:** *This excellent Surya Bhedana should again and again be practiced as it purifies the brain, destroys diseases rising from excess of wind, and cures maladies caused by worms (bacteria).*

*(Prior to this Swatmarama Suri says generally about Pranayama Verse. 45: At the end of inhalation, (Puraka) the Jalandhara Bandha should be practised. At the end of Kumbhaka, and at the beginning of exhalation (Rechaka) Uddiyana Bandha should be practiced.)*

**Verse 46 :** *Contracting the throat (in the Jalandhara Bandha) and the anus (in Mula Bandha) at the same time, and by drawing back the abdomen (in Uddyana Bandha) the Prana flows through Sushumna Nadi (Brahma Nadi)*

**Surya Bhedhana According Gheranda Samhita Chapter Five Verse 58-59:** *Now here Surya Bhedhana. Inspire with all your strength the external air through the sun-tube (right nostril) Retain this air with greatest care, performing Jalandhara Bandha. Let the Kumbhaka be kept up as long as the perspiration does not burst out from the tips of the nails or the roots of the hair.*

### **Further Information from Gheranda Samhita:**

*Verses 60-65: Describes the ten Prana Vayus-Prana, Apana, Samana, Udana and Vyana (inner body) and Naga (eructation) Kurma (opens eyelids) Krikara (causes sneezing) Devadutta, (yawning), Dhananjaya (pervades whole gross body and does not leave it even after death.) Naga-consciousness; Kurma-vision; Krikara, hunger and thirst, Devadutta, yawning, and Dhananjaya, sound.*

*Verses 66-67: All these Vayus, separated by the Surya Nadi, let him rise up from the root of the navel, then let him expire by the Ida Nadi, slowly and with unbroken, continuous force. Let him again draw the air through the right nostril, retaining it, as taught above, and exhale it. Let him do this again and again. In this process the air is always inspired through Surya Nadi.*

*Verse 68 : The Surya Bhedhana Kumbhaka destroys decay and death, awakens the Kundali Shakti, increases the body fire. O Chanda! Thus, have I taught thee Surya Bhedhana!*

### **UJJAYI PRANAYAMA**

#### **HATHA YOGA PRADAPIKA :**

*Verse 51 Chapter Two : Now Ujjayi is described. Closing the mouth, draw in air slowly through both nostrils till the breath is felt to be sonorous from the throat to the heart.*

*Verse 52 : Perform Kumbhaka as before and exhale through Ida. This removes disorders in the throat caused by phlegm and stimulates digestive fire.*

*Verse 53 : It puts an end to the diseases of the Nadis and the Dhatus as also dropsy. Walking or standing this Ujjayi should be practised.*

**GHERANDA SAMHITA : DESCRIBES UJJAYI IN LESSON FIVE VERSE 69 :** *Close the mouth, draw in external air by both the nostrils, and pull up internal air from lungs and throat, retain them in mouth.*

*Verse 70 : Then, having “washed” the mouth, perform Jalandhara. Let him perform Kumbhaka with all his might and retain the air unhindered.*

*Verse 71-72 : All works are accomplished by Ujjayi Kumbhaka. He is never attacked by phlegm, diseases, or nervous diseases, or indigestion or dysentery, or consumption or cough, or fever or enlarged spleen. Let a man perform Ujjayi to destroy decay and death.*

### **PLAVINI ACCORDING TO HATHA YOGA PRADIPIKA**

**Hatha Yoga Pradipika: Chapter II, Verse 70:** *Then Plavini is described. Owing to the air, which has been abundantly drawn in, completely filling the interior, the Yogi floats easily, even in deep waters, like a lotus leaf.*

## KAPALA BHATI AS A CLASSICAL PRANAYAMA

Swami Gitananda Giri writes : As **Kapalabhati** is mentioned by many writers as being one of the Eight Classical Breaths, I feel compelled to include it in any discussion of these Pranayamas. Only a brief description will be given for Kapalabhati, which also is considered to be one of the most powerful of the cleansing routines known in Yoga. Much confusion exists as to its actual technique, many claiming that it is good for chest problems including asthma. The name “**Kapalabhati**” implies that it has something to do with the head, rather than the chest, as “Kapala” means the “skull” and “Bhati”, “to shine” or “to make clean, in luster”.

“This **Karma** or **Kriya** is to control and cleanse the **Pancha-Bhutas** or the **Five Great Elements** of earth, water, fire, air and ether associated with the brain. **Earth** stands for the **physical matter** of the brain; **water** for the **cerebro-spinal fluid**; **fire** for the **nerve energy** passing through the association fibres connecting nerve tissues and cells; **air** for the **pressure holding the brain** in its skull cavity; and **ether**, for the **subtle energies** moving in the **arachnoid** and **sub-arachnoid** cavity of the brain.”

“Tumors, brain obstructions and congestion of brain cells represent the earth cleansing; a milky or murky spinal fluid sometimes showing traces of blood is the cleansing of the water; impeded or short-circuited nerve impulses are the cleansing of the fire; any congestion in the skull cavity represents air cleansing; unbalanced, irrational states of mind is that cleansed by the ether.”

The technique for **Kapalabhati** is as follows: sit in any conventional, straight-back posture, expel all of the air in the lungs and pull in the stomach. Rapidly breathe in and out through both nostrils visualizing the Prana as flowing from the front bottom of the brain to the back and then over the top of the brain and circulating through the brain, on the in breath. The Apana is visualised as rising from the base of the spine, over the top of the brain and then circulating through the brain on the explosive out breath. Do thirty rounds for a beginning, then increase a few rounds each day as long as there is no dizziness or fainting from hyperventilation. One hundred and twenty rounds at a sitting is the maximum. There is no point in going beyond this number of rounds. Stretch out and relax for two to five minutes after any strenuous Pranayama and then continue daily activities. Kapalabhati is highly recommended for students who have to do a great deal of study and need a clean, clear mind, and for spiritual aspirants before their concentration and meditation.

## GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE CLASSICAL EIGHT PRANAYAMAS BY YOGAMAHARISHI DR SWAMI GITANANDA GIRI GURU MAHARAJ

“God is breath” is the oldest Sanskrit writing. Etymologists have stated that our Sanskrit word “**Brahman**” is a synonym for “breath.” “**Breath is life, life is breath.**” The Hebrew mystic states, “**God breathed into Man the Breath of Life and he became a living Breath (Soul).**” To be “in breath” is to be “in God.” The Greek word for the taking-up of the breath, “in spiro” means to be “in Spirit.” “Ex spiro”, the expelled breath, is “to be parted from

God.” The taking of breath is a holy, divine function and those who aspire to Divinity must master the Kriyas and Prakriyas of Pranayama, the Yoga of Controlled Breathing.

Many of our modern researchers, having limited access to ancient manuscripts or teachings, have assumed that there are a limited number of Pranayamas and Hatha Yoga Asanas, Kriyas and Mudras. In our ancient Vedic Yoga Schools, some hundreds of Asanas were taught along with nearly one hundred breath controls. Yet many of our ancient writings contain only a few of these techniques, giving a limited scope to the practice of Yoga.

Many modern Yoga writers do not mention Pranayama at all in their books, and if they do, they do not give any instruction in the techniques. In this they leave an impression that Pranayama is not important. The truth behind the meaning of Pranayama and its great value in the evolutionary process can really only be understood by those who take up Pranayama Yoga.

Ancient and modern writers and teachers differ as to the number of Pranayamas, the order in which they should be practiced and their importance. Swatmarama Suri in HATHA PRADIPIKA states that there are Eight Pranayamas: Surya Bhedana, Ujjayi, Sitkari, Sitali, Bhastrika, Bhramari, Murch'cha and Plavini. Patanjali in the YOGA SUTRA writes only of four functions of breath: **Prana** as the inspiration of breath; **Vidharana** as the retention of breath or **Kumbhaka**; **Prachch'hardana** as the expulsion or **Rechaka**, and **Apana**, as the held out part of breathing. The control of all of these four functions is Pranayama. Further **Vidharana** or **Kumbhaka** is of four types: **Bahya** is the restraint of breath after the breath is let out, a **Shunya** or vacuum state; **Abhyantara** is the restraint of the held in breath; **Kevala Kumbhaka** is of two types, one which is natural or **Sahaja**, and the other, **Sahita** or **Shunyaka**, which is a controlled restraint for a measured period of time.

Some modern writers agree to some degree with Swatmarama Suri and Patanjali. The late Swami Kuvalayananda says there are eight Pranayamas: Ujjayi, Kapalabhati, Bhastrika, Surya Bhedana, Sitali, Bhramari, Murch'cha and Plavini. Kuvalayananda pays no attention to Sitkari and instead includes the Kapalabhati, one of the Shat Karmas, the six classical cleansers.

Dr. K. S. Joshi agrees with Swatmarama, but adds two techniques as Kapalabhati and the Kumbhaka, which he states, have two parts, the Sahita and the Kevala. B.K.S. Iyengar details Pranayama as Ujjayi, Nadi Shoddhana, Surya Bhedana, Bhastrika, Bhramari, Sitali, Sama Vritta, Visama Vritta, Viloma-Anuloma and Pratiloma and says that Kapalabhati is a Bhastrika. Kumbhaka includes Bahya and Antara Kumbhaka and a particular form of Ayama or control produces this Antara or inner restraint.

This study sheet is a general reminder of the main aspects of the traditional Eight Classical Pranayamas. The Eight Classical Pranayamas detailed here are considered by the Rishi Culture Ashtanga Yoga Tradition of Dr. Swami Gitananda to be relatively advanced practices, which should be taught only after basic training in proper breathing is given, especially through the Hathenas, or Forcing Techniques which condition the body to deep, controlled, conscious breathing. Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri was the lineage holder of the Yoga Bengali Tantric tradition of Yogamaharishi Kakananda Bhrihu. This tradition is part of the Dakshina Marga Tantra, which aims at the control of Shakti through an elaborately structured life style, and cultivation of hundreds of Yoga techniques. In this tradition more than 375 Asanas, Kriyas, Mudras, Bandhas and cleansing practices are taught

along with more than 120 Pranayamas, designed to cleanse, purify, strengthen and sensitize the body, emotions and mind, making the human being a fit vehicle of the Divine Spirit.

As Swamiji often said, “God breathed the Breath of Life into man and he became a living soul. Now, it is our duty as evolving beings to guard and cherish that Breath of Life as our spiritual treasure. We must deepen it, lengthen it, control it, expand it and become conscious of it and its potentiality to link us with our Highest Nature. That is the real Pranayama, the ancient spiritual Science of Vital Control.”