

Take a Deep Breath

By Acarya Shankarsan'ananda



Each time I open my computer a message appears on my desktop: "take a deep breath", and so I do, and each time I realize how tremendous important proper breathing is. Just try it yourself. Close your eyes and inhale slowly and deeply. How do you feel? Yes, it feels good. For thousands of years the yogi has understood the important of proper breathing. We absorb the vital life energy, called prana, not only through our food and water intake, but especially through the air we breathe.

Therefore the yogis have always emphasized the importance of breathing, and they developed a series of specific exercises called pranayama (breath control) to maximize the amount of vital life energy absorbed with every breath. In ordinary breathing we extract only very little prana from the atmosphere. But when we concentrate and consciously regulate our breathing, we are able to store up a great amount of prana in our body. Those who practice systematic and deep breathing can feel the tremendous and vitalizing effect of the

absorption of prana, as every part of the body becomes energized. Eventually the whole body comes under control, and diseases can be destroyed from the root.

Proper control of breath can alleviate many diseases such as heart diseases, high and low blood pressure, asthma and tuberculosis. A popular natural method of childbirth, the La Maze method, that teaches pregnant women deep breathing exercises similar to yogic breathing, helps to relieve the pain of childbirth. Breath control dissolves emotional tension and relaxes the mind, increases will power, concentration and self-control. But more important for the yogi, it helps to elevate the mind during meditation to higher levels of consciousness and the yogi feels an oneness with the whole cosmos.

There are various levels of pranayama (breath control), but the higher levels may be dangerous if not learned in a systematic way from an authorized teacher. A proper system of pranayama can be learned from an Ananda Marga acarya.

