

# A Proud Moment for Indian Physiotherapy



## RASHTRIYA GAURAV AWARD

Presented to Dr. Nilima Patel

Delhi based NGO India International Friendship Society (IIFS) has been organizing the Rashtriya National Awards since long for successful and meritorious Indian personalities in various fields like science and technology, education, industry, fine arts, politics and social works, from the country and abroad (NRIs) in lieu of the services rendered by them and contributed remarkably towards progress of India in their respective fields. with excellence in their respective field.

It is indeed a matter of pride and privilege for physiotherapists across India that **Dr. Nilima Patel**, a physiotherapy professional into academics and clinical practice since last 30 years at College of Physiotherapy, S.S.G. Hospital, Baroda was selected for this prestigious award this year in May 2011 for so intricately connecting Science and Spirituality in Rehabilitation and contribution of the same for students, professionals and society.

She was conferred upon the award on 10th May 2011 at New Delhi, by Dr. Bhisma Narayan Singh, former Governor of Assam and Tamilnadu. A Trophy and a certificate of Excellence was presented to Dr. Patel for her meritorious services, outstanding performance and remarkable role in the society.

**The illustrious past recipients of Award include:** Beatified Mother Teresa, former Vice President of India B D Jatti, Governor Justice M Fatima Beevi, Gen. G V Krishna Rao, former Air-Chief Marshal N C Suri, former Chief Election Commissioner GVG Krishnamurthy, Renowned cardiologist Dr. Naresh Trehan, Playback singer S P Balasubramaniam, Educationist Dr. Abid Hussain, Sarod maestro Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Cricketer Sunil Gavaskar among many others.

**More than 50 distinguished professionals from different walks of life from all over India were awarded of which Dr. Patel was the only one from Gujarat, and the first Physiotherapist in India to be awarded this award.**

**Dr. Nilima Patel is associated with PYHSIOTIMES as the member of the Editorial Advisory Board right from its inception and authors a regular column "PHYSIO YOGA" in the magazine. We congratulate her on behalf of all our readers for this momentous achievement.**



# "PRANA" THE VITAL FORCE OF ENERGY & PRANAYAMA

Yoga primarily works with the energy in the body through the science of pranayama or energy-control. Prana also means 'breath.' Yoga teaches how to still the mind through breath-control and attain higher states of awareness. The higher teachings of yoga take one beyond techniques and shows yoga practitioner how to direct his concentration in such a way as not only to harmonize human with divine consciousness, but to merge his consciousness in the Infinite.



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Prana is a subtle invisible life force. This life force pervades the body and it is the factor that connects the body and the mind, because it is connected on one side with the body and on the other side with the mind. It is the connecting link between the body and the mind. The body and the mind have no direct connection. They are connected through Prana only. In Vedantic philosophy, prana is the notion of a vital, life-sustaining force of living beings and vital energy.

Prana (प्राण, prāṇa) is the Sanskrit for "vital life" (from the root prā "to fill", cognate to Latin *plenus* "full"). It is one of the five organs of vitality or sensation, i.e. *prana* "breath", *vac* "speech", *chakshus* "sight", *shrotra* "hearing", and *manas* "thought" (nose, mouth, eyes, ears and mind.)

The word prana can be broken into its Sanskrit roots, "pra" which means 'prior' or 'to have previous existence', and "ana", which refers to a singular element, that basic unit, "anu" (or atom), which lies at the very foundation of everything. In this sense, the word prana literally implies that which is the 'precursor of', 'prerequisite for' manifestation, or material life.

Prana is more subtle than air and can be defined as the energy essence that is within everything in the universe. Prana is the principle of development and sustenance both of the nervous and cellular tissues of the body and the mind. God has provided prana, the supreme source of power, free of cost to all human beings. Proper utilization of this free source of energy can make remarkable changes to our health, vitality and self-confidence. We cannot simply equate prana with oxygen present in the air; the air we breathe is also filled with vital energy known as prana.

### The Life-Force

It is precisely the action of prana, that 'life-giving force', which gives birth to the world and its entire range of phenomenon. We could simply see prana as the total sum of 'energy' that enlivens the human being and all of nature.

As per the Science of Physics, "Force" cannot be seen, but it can be felt. Similarly as per knowledge of Spirituality we can't

see prana with the naked eye but it can be felt as some invisible force guiding us always to convert our human potential energy into kinetic energy for constructive work, positive health and wellness. I suppose that theoretically scientists may one day be able to develop the right instruments in order to detect it. But that would also suppose that they know what they are looking for... which is another matter altogether.

But, just because we cannot 'see' prana, we should be no less certain of its existence. Just as we know the wind by its effects on the trees, so too can we just as easily know prana through its effects. With every thought, every word and every movement of life we see the action of prana.

### How Do We Acquire This Life-Force?

As human beings, we receive this 'life-giving' prana most abundantly through the air that we breathe. **But it's also in the food we eat and the water we drink.** We absorb it in other ways too, such as through the skin.

- Prana is not air. It is not oxygen.
- It is not any particular nutrient component of the food we eat.
- Nor is it revealed in the concepts of electromagnetics, ions or any form of subatomic particle.

In yoga, the control of the breath is often synonymous with pranayama, yet the breath itself is not prana either. I.K. Taimni, in "The Science of Yoga," makes a good distinction between the breath and prana, and also points out an important connection.

**"Though prana is different from the breath, as electric current is different from the movement of the blades of an electric fan, still there is a close connection between the two – a connection which enables us to manipulate the currents of prana by manipulating the breath."**

### Energy in alternative medicine

The term energy has been widely used by writers and practitioners of various esoteric forms of spirituality and alternative medicine to refer to

a variety of phenomena. Such "energy" is often seen as a continuum that unites body and mind.

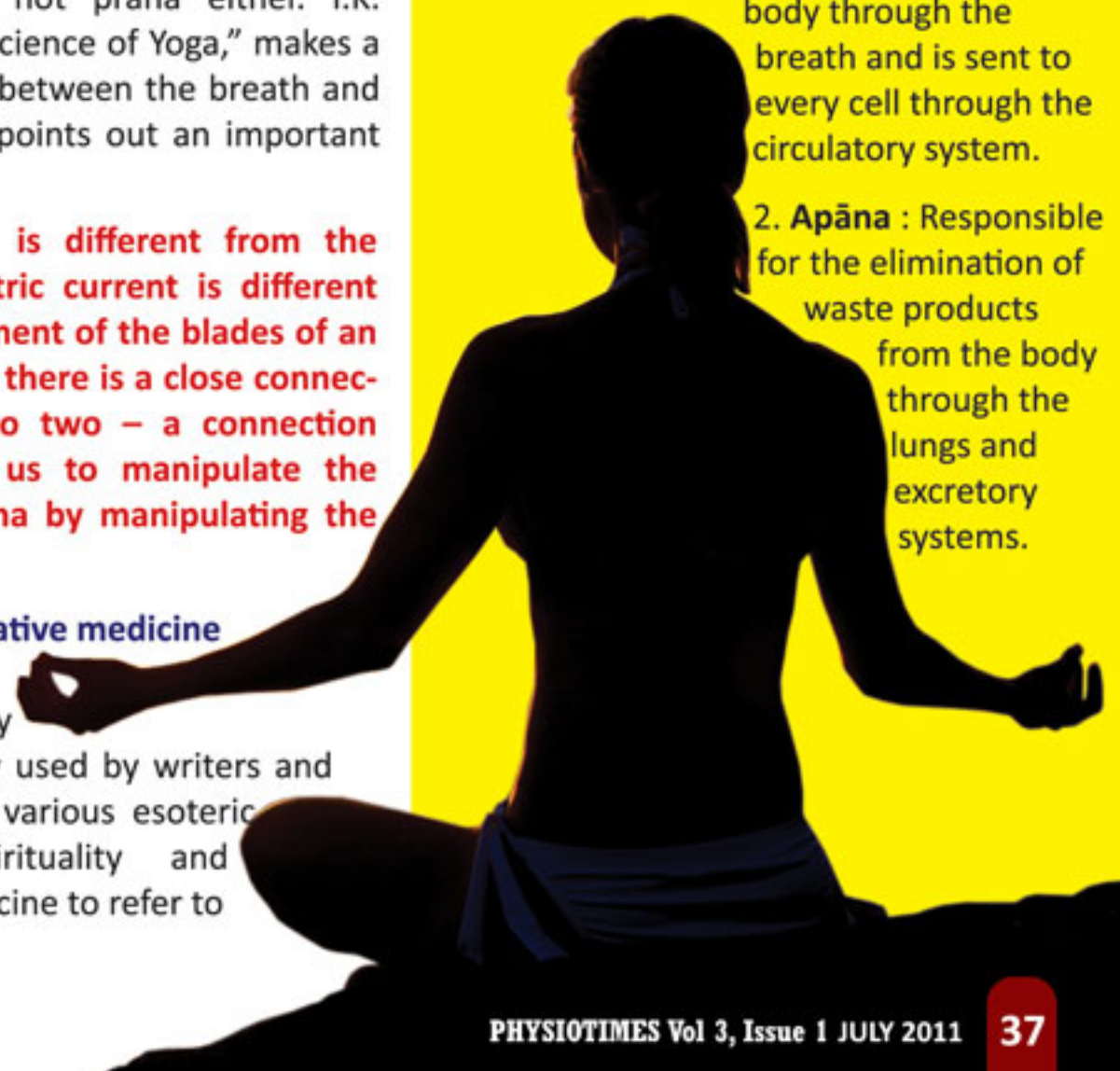
**Spiritual energy is often closely associated with the metaphor of life as breath - the words 'qi', 'prana', and 'spirit', for instance, are all related in their respective languages to the verb 'to breathe'. Sometimes it is equated with the movement of breath in the body, sometimes described as visible "auras", "rays", or "fields" or as audible or tactile "vibrations". These are often held to be perceptible to anyone, though this may be held to require training or sensitization through various practices.**

The approaches known collectively as "energy therapies" vary widely in philosophy, approach, and origin. The ways in which this energy is used, modified, or manipulated to effect healing also vary. For example, acupressure involves manual stimulation of pressure-points, while some forms of yoga rely on breathing exercises.

### The Five Prāṇas

In Ayurveda, the Prāṇa is further classified into subcategories, referred to as prana vayus. According to Hindu philosophy these are the vital principles of basic energy and subtle faculties of an individual that sustain physiological processes. There are five pranas or vital currents in the Hindu system:

1. **Prāṇa** : Responsible for the beating of the heart and breathing. Prana enters the body through the breath and is sent to every cell through the circulatory system.
2. **Apāna** : Responsible for the elimination of waste products from the body through the lungs and excretory systems.





3. **Uḍāna** : Responsible for producing sounds through the vocal apparatus, as in speaking, singing, laughing, and crying. Also it represents the conscious energy required to produce the vocal sounds corresponding to the intent of the being. Udana gives the higher centers total control over the body.

4. **Samāna** : Responsible for the digestion of food and cell metabolism(i.e. the repair and manufacture of new cells and growth). Samana also includes the heat regulating processes of the body. By meditational practices one can see auras of light around every being. Yogis who do special practise on samana can produce a blazing aura at will.

5. **Vyāna** : Responsible for the expansion and contraction processes of the body, e.g. the voluntary muscular system.

## PRANAYAMA

Pranayama (Sanskrit:prāṇāyāma) is a Sanskrit word meaning "extension of the prana or breath" or more accurately, "extension of the life force". The word is composed of two Sanskrit words "Prana", life force, or vital energy, particularly, the breath, and "āyāma", to extend, draw out, restraint, or control.

**Pranayama is an exact science. Regulation of breathing, in fact, is natural.**

**It hardly offers any scope of artificiality. Expansion of individual energy into cosmic energy is called prāṇāyāma.**

Pranayama is the practice in which the control of prana is achieved (initially) from the control of one's breathing. According to Yogic philosophy the breath, or air, is merely a gateway to the world of prana and its manifestation in the body. In yoga, pranayama techniques are used to control the movement of these vital energies within the body, which is said to lead to an increase in vitality in the practitioner. **A Yogi measures the span of his life not by the number of years but by the number of his breaths.**

### A. Hatha and Raja Yoga Varieties

Some scholars distinguish between hatha and raja yoga varieties of pranayama, with the former variety usually prescribed for the beginner. According to Taimni hatha yogic pranayama involves manipulation of pranic currents through breath regulation for bringing about the control of chitta-vrittis (thought waves) and changes in consciousness, whereas raja yogic pranayama involves the control of chitta-vrittis by consciousness directly through the will of the mind. Students qualified to practice pranayama are therefore always initiated first in the techniques of hatha pranayama.

### B. Bhagavad Gītā

According to Bhagwad Gita, "prāṇāyāma" is translated to "trance induced by stopping all breathing", also being made from the two separate Sanskrit words, "prāṇa" and "āyāma".[

### C. Patanjali

Pranayama is the fourth 'limb' of the eight limbs of Rajayoga mentioned in verse 2.29 in the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. He presents pranayama as essentially an exercise that is preliminary to concentration.

### D. Medical Science

Several researchers have reported that pranayama techniques are beneficial in treating a range of stress related disorders improving autonomic functions, relieving symptoms of asthma, and reducing signs of oxidative stress.





**Oxidative stress** represents an imbalance between the production and manifestation of reactive oxygen species and a biological system's ability to readily detoxify the reactive intermediates or to repair the resulting damage. Disturbances in the normal redox state of tissues can cause toxic effects through the production of peroxides and free radicals that damage all components of the cell, including proteins, lipids and DNA. In humans, oxidative stress is involved in many diseases. Examples include, atherosclerosis, Parkinson's disease, heart diseases, , Alzheimer's disorder, and Chronic fatigue syndrome.

#### **Benefits of Pranayama**

1. It manages psycho physical diseases.
2. It helps in controlling the modalities of mind.
3. Intellectual development is accelerated.
4. It gives opportunities to soul to flourish.
5. Intellectual development is accelerated.
6. Reduce Breathing Rate which leads to
  - Slowing down the heart rate as more oxygen can be pumped even with less number of breaths.
  - Reduces wear and tear of internal organs.
  - Lowering of blood pressure, relaxation of body tensions and quieter nerves
7. Better functioning of autonomic nervous system improves the functioning of lungs, heart, pancreas, diaphragm, abdomen, intestines, kidneys and pancreas.
8. Immune system is strengthened.
9. Quality of life improves as age advances.

#### **Cautions**

Many yoga teachers recommend that pranayama techniques be practiced with care, and that advanced pranayama techniques should be practiced under the guidance of a teacher. These cautions are also made in traditional Hindu literature.

**“The science of breath begins with awareness and ends with awareness”. One of the best ways to regulate that nervous system, and in turn the body and mind, is through the breath. Let us make a collective effort to understand the prana - the life force by mechanism of pranayama - the yogic breathing for vigor and vitality.**

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