

Kumbhakās and Their Health Implication

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Link : https://santiniketansahityapath.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/9_Abhilash-Banerjee.pdf

Abstract: According to the yogic texts there are two types of nāḍī purification: samanū (accompaniment of bījamantra) and nirmanū (done by dhauti karma). In the context of śaṭkarmasādhana we can find dhauti karma. In this context we discuss about samanū nāḍīśuddhi. The aspirant should sit in padmāsana posture on a prescribed seat. In this position one needs the help of a Guru. The practitioner should invite the deities to the various parts of the body as advised by the Guru. After that, one should Contemplating on the vāyubīja which is smoky in colour. Then let one inhale through the left nostril repeating the bījamantra for sixteen times then retaining the air for the time it takes to repeat the bījamantra for sixty-four times and after that let him exhale through the right nostril with repeating the bījamantra for thirty-two times. After that, one should try to raise the fire from the root of the navel. With the agni-bīja (ॠ) one should inhale air for sixteen times and retain the air for the period required for sixty-four times with the bījamantra and exhale it through the left nostril repeating the same bījamantra for thirty-two times. After that one should focus at the tip of the nose with concentrated mind and inhale fresh air through left nostril repeating the tham-bīja (ॡ) for sixteen times. Retain the air for the duration required to repeat vaṁ-bīja (ॢ) for sixty-four times and imagining that the nectar is oozing and after that exhale the air repeating the lakāra (ॣ) for thirty-two times. After that, we learn that there are eight varieties of kumbhaka prāṇāyāma and they are like *sahita, sūryabheda, ujjāyī, śītalī, bhastrikā, mūrccā, and kevalī*.

According to some yogic texts there are two types of sahita kumbhaka like sagarbha and nigarbha. At the time of a repeating a bīja mantra one can perform kumbhaka and this is called sagarbha kumbhaka. But when there is no repetition of such bīja mantra this is called nigarbha kumbhaka.

Key words: *Sahita, sūryabheda, ujjāyī, śītalī, bhastrikā, mūrccā, and kevalī*.

Sagarbha kumbhaka

To perform this *prāṇāyāma*, one must first sit in the sukhāsana posture facing towards east or north. Then focus on Brahma, associated with rajas, red in colour and known by the letter ॐ (of Om). Then one inhales through the left nostril, repeating the mantra sixteen times and before holding the breath, he should perform uḍḍiyāna. After that one should intend on the Hari associated with sattva, dark in colour and known by the letter ॐ (of Om). One should perform kumbhaka repeating ॐ for sixty-four times. Then one should focus on the Śiva associated with tamas, white in colour and known by the letter ॐ (of Om). After that one should exhale the breath by the help of right nostril repeating ॐ for thirty-two times. After that one should repeat the process through the right nostril, perform everything which is already prescribed and exhale through the left nostril. Thus, *prāṇāyāma* should be practiced again and again. One should hold both the nostrils after pūraka with the thumb and the little fingers and we should not use the index

and the middle fingers.

अनुलोमविलोमेन वारंवारं च साधयेत्।
पूरकान्ते कुम्भकान्तं धृतनासापुटद्वयम्।
कनिष्ठानामिकाङ्गुष्ठैस्तर्जनी मध्यमे विना॥¹ (Gh.S. 5. 53)

(“Alternating the nostril practice Prāṇāyāma again and again. After Pūraka hold the two nostrils with the thumb and the little and right fingers not using the middle and the index finger so long as breath is restrained.”)

Nigarbha

In this phase of *prāṇāyāma*, the *bīja* mantra is not used. One should rotate his left palm and place it on the left knee. This rotation should continue until one completes one to a hundred cycles with pūraka, kumbhaka and recaka. Prāṇāyāma has its own three kinds. In the highest type of prāṇāyāma pūraka lasting for 20 mātrās, kumbhaka lasting for 80 mātrās and recaka lasting for 40 mātrās. In the moderate prāṇāyāma pūraka lasting for 16 mātrās, kumbhaka lasting for 64 mātrās and recaka lasting for 32 mātrās. In the lowest type of prāṇāyāma pūraka lasting for 12 mātrās, kumbhaka lasting for 48 mātrās and recaka lasting for 24 mātrās. One can get hot temperature by performing lowest type of prāṇāyāma, feeling vibration specially in spinal column by performing moderate type of prāṇāyāma and leads toward ultimate success by performing highest type of prāṇāyāma. There are lots of good effects which we can easily get from prāṇāyāma such as: it enables movement through air, various types old diseases are easily destroyed, its helps to awaken our kuṇḍalinī and so many.

प्राणायामात्खेचरत्वं प्राणायामाद्गुजां हतिः।
प्राणायामाच्छक्तिबोधः प्राणायामान्मनोन्मनी।
आनन्दो जायते चित्ते प्राणायामी सुखी भवेत्॥² (Gh.S. 5. 57)

(“Prāṇāyāma gives the ability to move in air. By Prāṇāyāma diseases are destroyed. By Prāṇāyāma the Śakti { kuṇḍalinī } is awakened. By Prāṇāyāma one enters the manomani state. By Prāṇāyāma, the mind experiences bliss and the practitioner becomes happy.”)

Sūryabhedana

To perform this posture, one must inhale external air through the right nostril according to his own body capacity and retain it with great effort using jālandharabandha. Until one sweats from tips of the nails and roots of hair he should continue this kumbhaka. The major inner body air like prāṇa, apāna, samāna, udāna, vyāna are directly connected with sūrya (right nostril). It also helps prevent various types of diseases.

बोधयेत्कुण्डलीं शक्तिं देहाग्निं च विवर्धयेत्।
इति ते कथितं चण्ड सूर्यभेदनमुत्तमम्॥³ (Gh.S. 5.63)

(“The Sūryabhedana Kumbhaka prevent old age and death ; awakens the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti and increases the heat of the body. Thus have I, oh Caṇḍa explained to you the excellent Suryabhedana.”)

Ujjāyī

To perform this posture, one must inhale external air through both the nostrils and hold it inside the body. Then move the air within the mouth while slightly bending the neck with

jālandharabandha. One should hold the air according to their physical capacity. This kumbhaka helps us to recover various diseases like consumption, enlarged spleen, cough etc. It also helps delay aging and prevent premature death.

उज्जायीकुम्भकं कृत्वा सर्वकार्याणि साधयेत्।
न भवेत्कफरोगश्च कुरवायुरजीर्णकम्॥⁴ (Gh.S. 5. 66)

(“Practice of Ujjāyī Kumbhaka accomplishes all things. There will be no disorder of phlegm, flatulence or indigestion, rheumatism, consumption, cough, lever or enlarged spleen.”)

Śitalī

As the name suggests, it aims to provide a cooling effect to the body. For this posture, one must draw in air using the tongue and try to fill the chest slowly. After that one should perform kumbhaka for a short time and exhale the inner air through both the nostrils. If an aspirant performs this posture correctly, they will never suffer from indigestion.

सर्वदा साधयेद्योगी शीतलीकुम्भकं शुभम्।
अजीर्णं कफपित्तं च नैव तस्य प्रजायते॥⁵ (Gh.S. 5. 69)

(“A Yogi should always practice the beneficial Śitalī Kumbhaka. He will never suffer from indigestion or disorders due to phlegm or bile.”)

Bhastrikā

In this posture, one should breathe like the bellow of a blacksmith. He should breathe steadily through both nostrils for twenty times. If the aspirant performs bhastrikā three times in one sitting then he will be free from different diseases.

त्रिवारं साधयेदेनं भस्त्रिकाकुम्भकं सुधीः।
न च रोगो न च क्लेश आरोग्यं च दिने दिने॥⁶ (Gh.S. 5. 72)

(“A wise man should perform this Bhastrikā three times {in one sitting}. There will be no disease or suffering. Day by day he will gain in health.”)

Bhramarī

In this method, the yogi should practice pūraka and kumbhaka while closing the ears with both the hands in mid-night within a sound less place. After some time, he should listen with the right ear for sound like crickets, flutes, thunders, cymbals, big bee, trumpet, drum in proper order. Through this practice one can touch his ultimate goal and he certainly attains success in samādhi.

ध्वनेरन्तर्गतं ज्योतिर्ज्योतिरन्तर्गतं मनः।
तन्मनो विलयं याति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम्
एवं भ्रामरीसंसिद्धिः समाधिसिद्धिमाप्नुयात्॥⁷ (Gh.S. 5. 77)

(“... that manasa disappears. Then remains Viṣṇu which is the ultimate aim and object { of the yogi’s quest }. By mastering Bhramarī in this way one succeeds in Samādhi.”)

Mūrcchā

In this posture, one should fix the mind between the eye-brows with kumbhaka and detaching from every object of the world. One should try to unite with the Ātman during this practice. When the breath goes out, it makes a sound like ‘haṃ’; when it comes in, it sounds like ‘saḥ’. It is called ajapā gāyatrī and it is very essential for every aspirant. According to this text, the size of our body is ninety-six times breadth. The air which goes out from our body it can reach up to twelve fingers. While one singing the air can reach

up to sixteen fingers, at the time of eating it reaches up to twenty fingers. When walking, the air reaches up to twenty-four fingers, at the time of sleeping the air reaches up to thirty fingers. When, one in meeting phase the air reaches up to thirty-six fingers.

Kevalī

Throughout life, one should recite the 'haṃas' mantra at the ajapā rate (15 times per minute). The yogi should inhale air through both nostrils and hold it until one count sixty-four in the very first day. One should practice this for five to eight times in a day. Or one may do it thrice in a day after every eight hours. If one masters kevalī kumbhaka, they can achieve everything in this world.

प्राणायामं केवली च तदा वदति योगवित्।
केवलीकुम्भके सिद्धे किं न सिध्यति भूतले॥⁹ (Gh.S. 5.91)

("To that Prāṇāyāma, which then results, the Yogis give the name Kevalī. Kevalī Kumbhaka being mastered what is not achieved in this world?")

Conclusion

So yogi should always try to achieve all the kumbhaka to get the highest way of yoga. If he follows all the things which is describe then certainly he physically and mentally happy. Because all those kumbhaka has their good effect over body and mind.

End Note

GH.S.= Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā.

Ś.S.= Śiva Saṃhitā.

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