

Top Outside: *The Tree of Yoga* (written by BKS Iyengar with Forward by Patricia Walden) – emphasizing leaves of tree to introduce topic of Prāṇāyāma



Bottom Outside: Kūrma (& the production of prāṇā)

- avatar of Lord Viṣṇu, who takes the form of a tortoise in order to crawl under and lift Mt. Meru so that the angels and devils can use the mountain as a churning rod to produce amṛta (nectar of immortality, elixir of life, prāṇā)
- Lord Viṣṇu as Kūrma symbolizes Puruṣa (seer, soul, Lord of the Body), the piece of divinity or of Universal Spirit that exists in each of us
- our body represents Prakṛti, nature, and becomes the fountain for the production of prāṇā, while the Lord of the Body (Puruṣa) is its generative force
- Atman acts as the tortoise, who lifts and keeps our diaphragm floating upward, bringing our breath into contact with the five inner elements of the body and its seven constituents, as well as the ten types of vital energies in our body.
- through this contact, and with the help of the seer (Puruṣa), our spine, and our breath, prāṇā (the elixir of life-force) is produced in our body
- since prāṇā is a self-energizing force, it generates more power through the process of Prāṇāyāma





Bottom Inside: Five elements











tejas fire







Inside Panels: Ten Vital Energies

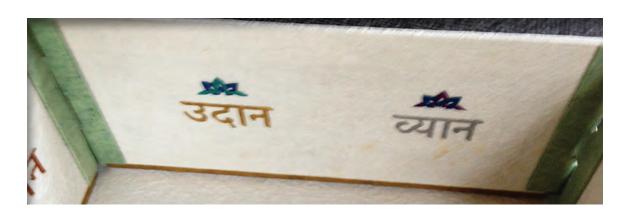
















Outside Panels: Four Elements/Movements of Prāṇāyāma



Note: in Sutra II.49, Patañjali uses the word śvāsa for inhalation, **praśvāsayoḥ** for exhalation, and **vicchedaḥ** for stoppage, but I chose the words BKS lyengar used in *The Tree of Yoga*.





1. pūraka (inhalation)







2. recaka (exhalation)







3. kumbhaka (retention after inhalation and exhalation)







4. nirbīja (seedless, unsupported); pranayama that takes place by itself and has become natural and effortless





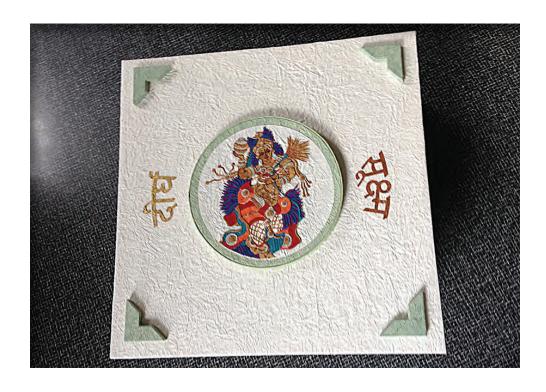




Top Inside: Two main characteristics of Prāṇāyāma encircling Mohinī, a second avatar of Lord Viṣṇu in the Churning of the Ocean Allegory



Mohinī: form that Lord Viṣṇu takes of a beautiful dancing woman who discerningly distributes the amṛta (prāṇā, nectar of immortality) only to the deserving. Just as amṛta is the product of the churning of the ocean, one product of the practice of Prāṇāyāma makes is the purifying of the blood (referred to as 'a constituent of jewels' or 'the jewel of blood' [ratna pūrita dhātu]). Full use in Prāṇāyāma of this absorption and re-absorption of energy will allow one to live a hundred years with perfect health of body, clarity of mind, and equipoise of spirit. That is why the practice of Prāṇāyāma is considered to be a great science and art. (*Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, p. 164)



Round Panel on top of inside top: How the Nectar of Immortality was Produced through the Churning of the Ocean (an allegory for what happens in the human body when practicing Prāṇāyāma)

This piece is still being worked on.



Base of Mt. Meru diaphragm, which resides above the seat of the soul

Mt. Meru churning rod represents the chest/spinal column that acts as a whisk to churn

the breath to produce energy

Lord Adiśeşa suṣumna (central nervous system), the rope which dashes or controls the

spine in respiration. Just as Adiśeṣa was used as a rope for churning, so inhalation and exhalation are two ends of the central nervous system, the rod that churns to create the energy that is then stored in the seven chambers of the spine. Together they churn the inbreath and outbreath to generate the

vital energy known as prāṇā.

Adiśeṣa's head pingalā nādī (sympathetic nervous system) or upward course of in-breath

Adiśeṣa's tail idā nādī (parasympathetic nervous system) or downward course of out-breath

Lord Viṣṇu as Kūrma Puruṣa, the seer or soul in each of us

amṛta prāṇā











