

Chapter 2

Literary Research

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2.0 LITERARY RESEARCH: CONCEPT OF PRĀṆA AND PRĀṆĀYĀMA FROM ANCIENT INDIAN TEXTS

2.1 BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

Prāṇa or vital energy is the vital force according the traditional Indian literature. It is considered to be the life force. It is manifested in the gross form through the process of breathing. Prāṇa is considered to be the sukṣma, subtle, whereas the breath is considered as sthula, the gross one. Since it is Prāṇa that sets the mind in motion, the process of regulation of breathing is said to influence the flow of Prāṇa, and thereby the mind. The process, by which the Prāṇa is controlled by regulation of external breath, is termed prāṇāyāma.

There are three components involved different practices of prāṇāyāma: pūraka (inhalation), recaka (exhalation) and kumbhaka (breath retention). The practice of kumbhaka (breath retention) is further classified into three, namely, antarkumbhaka (internal retention), bāhyakumbhaka (external retention) and kevalakumbhaka (automatic retention). The aim of prāṇāyāma is to unite the prāṇa with the apāna, further push the united vital force slowly towards the head. Thus, process of prāṇāyāma leads to awakening of the dormant kuṇḍalinī (Muktibodhananda, 2002; Nagendra, 2007; Saraswati, 2002).

2.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF LITERARY RESEARCH

- To understand the concept of Prāṇa and prāṇāyāma
- To explore the methods and effects of prāṇāyāma
- To recognize the concept, practice and effects of kumbhaka

2.3 MATERIALS AND METHODS- SOURCE MATERIAL

- Ṛgveda
- Atharvaveda
- Pātañjalayogasūtra
- Haṭhayogapradīpikā
- Praśnopaniṣat
- Kaṭhopeniṣat
- Taittirīya Upaniṣat
- Śrīmadbhagavadgītā
- Śiva Svarodaya
- Śiva Samhitā
- Śiva Sūtra
- Yoga Vāsiṣṭha
- Vivekacūḍāmaṇi
- Amritanāda Upaniṣat
- Chāndogya Upaniṣat
- Śāṅḍilya Upaniṣat
- Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣat

2.4 CONCEPT OF PRĀṆA FROM THE ANCIENT INDIAN

LITERATURE

The “life” in a living being is represented by Breathing. Breath has been indicated as man's sole companion (Śiva Svarodaya, V: 219). However, the process of breathing is generally ignored and it remains co-existing to life. The breathing is not just the physical entity and is also the representation of the life force, Prāṇa. Thus, the regulation of breathing (prāṇāyāma) is considered to have physical, psychological as well as spiritual benefits.

Upaniṣat are considered to be the zist of the traditional knowledge base of Vedas. They consider the process of breathing as an essential means to reach the ultimate goal for a spiritual aspirant.

Prāṇa is a Sanskrit word derived from two roots 'prā' is a prefix used to denote constancy and 'ṇa' means 'movement'. Therefore prāṇa is a force (or energy) which is in a state of constant movement. The gross form of prāṇa is considered to be the flow of air through either nostrils while breathing. The nature of prāṇa is not static; it expands and contracts (Muktibodhananda, 1999). The importance of breathing and its diverse effects on human body has been described in an ancient text called Śiva svarodaya, described in a monograph named Svaya yoga (Muktibodhananda, 1999). The text describes the mind as citta, life force as prāṇa and the spirit as ātmā. Citta controls the five senses: the vision, smell, taste,

hearing, and touch. Prāṇa controls the five organs of action: speech, hands, feet, reproductive and excretory organs. Ātmā is the overall witness or controller.

2.4.1 THE ORIGIN AND IMPORTANCE OF PRĀṆA

A student asks the teacher as to the origin of prāṇa as follows:

भगवन् कुत एष प्राणो जायते कथं आयात्यस्मिञ्शरीर
आत्मानं वा प्रविभज्य कथं प्रातिष्ठते केनोत्क्रमते कथं बाह्यमभिधत्ते
कथंध्यात्ममिति ॥

Bhagavan kuta eṣa prāṇo jāyate katham āyātyasmiñśrīra
Ātmānaṁ vā pravibhajya katham prātiṣṭhate kenotkramate
katham bāhyamabhidhatte katham adhyātmamiti ॥

(*Praśnopaniṣat*, 3.1)

“ O venerable sir, from where is this prāṇa born? How does he come into this body? How again does he dwell by dividing himself? How does he depart? How does he support the external things and how the physical things?”

As an answer the teacher gives the secret of the source for prāṇa.

आत्मन एष प्राणो जायते । यथैषा पुरुषे
छायैतस्मिन्नेतदाततं मनोकृतेनायात्यस्मिञ्शरीरे ॥
ātmana eṣa prāṇo jāyate | yathaiṣā puruṣe
chāyaitasminnetadātataṁ manokṛtenāyātyasmiñśarīre ॥

(*Praśnopaniṣat*, 3.3)

Of the ātmana is born the prāṇa. Like the shadow of a man, it is spread out on that. It comes into the body by the acts of the mind.

प्राणो वसति तत्रैव वासनाभरलंकृतः ।

अनादिकर्मसंश्लिष्टः प्राप्याहङ्कारसंयुतः ॥

Prāṇo vasati tatraiva vāsanābharalaṅkṛtaḥ ।

Anādikarma saṁśliṣṭaḥ prāpyāhaṅkārasaṁyutaḥ ॥

(Śiva Saṁhitā 3.2)

“The prāṇa lives there adorned with various desires, accompanied by its past works that have no beginning, and joined with egoism (Ahaṁkāra).”

According to Yoga Vāsiṣṭha

देहेऽस्मिन्देहनाडीषु वातः स्फुरति योऽभितः ।

स्पन्देष्विव भुवो वारि स प्राण इति कीर्तितः ॥

Dehe'smindehanāḍīṣu vātaḥ sphurati yo'bhitaḥ,
Spandeṣviva bhuvo vāri sa prāṇa iti kīrtitaḥ.

(Yoga Vāsiṣṭha, 5.91.10)

“There is a circulating air breathing through the lungs and arteries of the body, as the water flows through the veins and power of the each, which is called the vital breath of life.”

प्राणाधीनपरिस्पन्दं चित्तं आहुः मनीषिणः ।

तस्मिन् संरोधिते नूनं उपशान्तं भवेत् मनः ॥

Prāṇādhīnapariṣpandaṁ cittam āhuḥ manīṣiṇaḥ ।
Tasmin saṁrodhite nūnam upaśāntaṁ bhavet manaḥ ॥

(Yoga Vāsiṣṭha, 17:3:45)

Wise man call the prāṇa as having the movement dependent on prāṇa (or vital air or bio-eneqy). When that prāṇa is controlled, the mind certainly become tranquil.

Prāṇa is considered to be the reason for the existance of consciousness

प्राणासमाचरे समदर्शनम् ।

Prāṇāsamācare samadarśanam ।

(Śiva Sūtra, 3. 22)

Prāṇa the vital force which controls and regulates the activities of a vehicle of consciousness on smacre on proper regulation and direction of prāṇa reffered to as prāṇāyāma. The attainment of the turīyā state of consciousness which integrates all the three lower states of consciousness into the unified state of ātmik consciousness.

नैसर्गिकः प्राणसंबन्धः।

Naisargikaḥ prāṇasambandhaḥ।

(Śiva Sūtra, 3. 43)

The principle of prāṇa, though it connects the pure consciousness of puruṣa with his vehicles in the realm of manifestation, belongs really to the realm of Prakṛti and so when the consciousness of the puruṣa reverts to the world of Reality as pointed out in the last aphorism, the prāṇa remains behind with the vehicle and its association with puruṣa is dissolved completely.

Breath is referred as the vehicle of supreme consciousness (Brahman) according to upaniṣats such as Taittirīya, Brāhmana and Maitrī. Praśnopaniṣat describes that the Prāṇa is born from the supreme self (ātman).

Prāṇa is considered to be originated at the origin of cosmos and therefore the eldest in existence. Chāndogya Upaniṣat describes this in the following verse:

यो ह वै ज्येष्ठं च श्रेष्ठं च वेद ज्येष्ठश्च ह वै श्रेष्ठश्च भवति प्राणो वाव ज्येष्ठश्च श्रेष्ठश्च ।
Yo ha vai jyeṣṭhaṁ ca śreṣṭhaṁ ca veda jyeṣṭhaśca ha vai śreṣṭhaśca
bhavati prāṇo vāva jyeṣṭhaśca śreṣṭhaśca ।

(Chāndogya Upaniṣat V.I.1)

Om, verily he who knows the eldest and best, surely becomes the eldest and the best. Prāṇa is indeed the eldest and the best. (of the organs)

This whole creation is said to be created out of prāṇa

यदिदं किं च जगत्सर्वं प्राण एजति निःसृतम् ।
Yadidaṁ kiṁ ca jagatsarvaṁ prāṇa ejati niḥśṛtam ।

(Kathopanishad2:3:2)

This whole world - whatever there is - vibrates having originated from prāṇa.

This cosmic prāṇa, also called mahāprāṇa, came into being at the time of creation.

Thus, in order to fully understand prāṇa, one must go back to the beginning of creation.

The soul of the gods is also manifested through the vital force-

या प्राणेन संभवत्यदितिर्देवतामयी । गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तीं या भूतेभिरव्यजायत ।

एतद् वै तत् ॥

Yā prāṇena sambhavatyaditirdevatāmayī |

Guhām praviśya tiṣṭhantīm yā bhūtebhirvyajāyata |

Etad vai tat ||

(Kathopanishad2:1:7)

Āditi, the soul of gods, who is manifested in the form of prāṇa and was created with the elements, dwells having entered the heart. He who knows her, knows the Brahman indeed. This is verily that.

This cosmic *prāṇa*, which is known as mahāprāṇa has come into existence since the time immortal, when the creation came into existence. The other names described for mahāprāṇa are mahāśakti and mahāmāyā.

Hymns from Ṛgveda state that the “Breath which is the life” (1:66:1, 1:113:16). “All the cosmos moves and breathes” implies another hymn from the Ṛgveda (1.101.5), meaning the breath pervades the entire world. *Atharva Veda* considers prāṇa as the fundamental basis of whatever is, was, and will be (10:XI, IV).

Prāṇa is considered to be the protector, which pervades in the whole existence of universe, is also considered to confer the vigor and intelligence to the living beings.

प्राणस्येदं वशे सर्वं त्रिदिवे यत् प्रतिष्ठितम् ।

मातेव पुत्रान् रक्षस्व श्रीश्च प्रज्ञां च विदेहि न इति ॥

Prāṇasyedaṁ vaśe sarvaṁ tridive yat pratiṣṭhitam ।
Māteva putrān rakṣasva śrīśca prajñāṁ ca videhi na iti ॥

(*Praśnopaniṣat 2.13*)

Prāṇa the vital force pervades all the three worlds. All the activities are directed by the Prāṇa. We request the Prāṇa to protect us as a mother protects her children. We also request the Prāṇa to stimulate our intellect.

This verse is considered as prayer to be recited prior to practice of *prāṇayāma* practices as a mark of respect to that life energy because of which we are existing.

As described in the śiva svarodaya, Devi asks Shiva, “In this universe, who is the greatest friend of man?”. Shiva replies:

प्राण एव परं मित्रं प्राण एव परः सखा ।

प्राणतुल्यः परो बन्धुर्नास्ति नास्ति वरानने ॥

Prāṇa eva paraṁ mitraṁ prāṇa eva paraḥ sakhā ।
Prāṇatulyaḥ paro bandhurnāsti nāsti varānane ॥

(*śiva svarodaya 219*)

Prāṇa is the greatest friend, prāṇa is the greatest companion. O fair one, there is no closer friend in this universe than prāṇa.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā elaborates the importance of prāṇa in life stating the following:

यावद्वायुः स्थितो देहे तावज्जीवनमुच्यते ।
मरणं तस्य निष्क्रान्तिस्ततो वायुं निरोधयेत् ॥
Yāvadvāyuḥ sthito dehe tāvajjīvanamucyate |
Maraṇam tasya niṣkrāntistato vāyuṁ nirodhayet ||

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.3)

As long as the vayu (prāṇa) remains in the body, there is life. Death occurs when the vayu leaves the body, therefore, retain the vayu.

The brahmanandavalli of Taittiriya Upaniṣat describes the importance of prāṇa in an individual's life in the following words:

तस्माद्वा एतस्मादन्नरसमयात् । अन्योऽन्तर आत्मा प्राणमयः ।
तेनैष पूर्णः । स वा एष पुरुषविध एव ।
तस्य पुरुषविधताम् । अन्वयं पुरुषविधः ॥
Tasmāddā etasmādannarasamayāt | anyo'ntar ātmā
prāṇamayah |
Tenaiṣa pūrṇah | sa vā eṣa puruṣavidha eva |
Tasya puruṣavidhatām | anvayaṁ puruṣavidhaḥ |

||Brahmānandavalli 2||

Verily, besides this physical body, which is made of the essence of food, there is another, inner self comprised to vital energy by which this physical self is filled.

Just as the fleshly body is in the form of a person, accordingly this vital self is in the shape of a person.

In the Bhṛuguvallī of Taittirīya Upaniṣat, the prāṇa is described as

प्राणो ब्रह्मेति व्यजानात् । प्राणाद्धयेव खल्विमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । प्राणेन जातानि
जीवन्ति । प्राणं प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्तीति । तद्विज्ञाय । पुनरेव वरुणं पितरमुपससार ।
अधीहि भगवो ब्रह्मेति । तं होवाच । तपसा ब्रह्म विजिज्ञासस्व । तपो ब्रह्मेति । स
तपोऽतप्यत । स तपस्तप्त्वा ॥

Prāṇo brahmeti vyajānāt | prāṇāddhyeva khalvimāni bhūtāni
jāyante | prāṇena jātāni jīvanti | prāṇam
prayantyaabhisamviśantīti | tadvijñāya | punareva varuṇam
pitaramupasasāra | adhihi bhagavo brahmeti | taṁ hovāca |
tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva | tapo brahmeti | sa tapo'tapyata | sa
tapastaptvā ||

(Taittirīya Upaniṣat 3.1)

After prāṇa, do Devas live, as also men and beasts. Prāṇa, verily, is the life-duration of beings; thence it is called the life-duration of all. The whole life-duration do they reach, who prāṇa as Brahman regard. Prāṇa, verily, is of beings the life duration; thence it is called the life-duration of all. Thus (ends the verse). Thereof, of the former, this one, verily, is the self-embodied. Than that, verily, than this one formed of prāṇa, there is another self within formed of Manas (thought-stuff). By him this one is filled.

Prāṇa is considered to pervade all the physical dimensions, and therefore the magnitude of it described as:

शरीरात्प्राणो द्वादशाङ्गुलाधिको भवति ।शरीरस्थं प्राणमग्निना सह योगाभ्यासेन समं
न्यूनं वायः करोति स योगिपुङ्गवो भवति । देहमध्ये शिखिस्थानं त्रिकोणं
तप्तजाम्बूनदप्रभं मनुष्याणाम् ।

Śarīrātprāṇo dvādaśāṅgulādhiko bhavati |
śarīrasthaṁ prāṇamagninā saha yogābhyāseṇa samaṁ nyūnaṁ
vāyaḥ karoti sa yogipuṅgavo bhavati | Dehamadhye
śikhisthānaṁtrikoṇaṁ taptajāmbūnadaprabhaṁ manuṣyāṅām |

(Śāṅḍilya Upaniṣat I 15)

The body is ninety-six in digits in length. Prāṇa extends twelve digits beyond the body. He who through the practice of yoga reduces his prāṇa within his body to make it equal to or not less than the fire in it becomes the greatest of the yogins. In a man, the region of the fire which is triangular in form and brilliant as the molten gold is situated in the middle of the body.

The spiritual significance of understanding the prāṇa is described as:

यः प्राणे तिष्ठन् प्राणादन्तरो यं प्राणो न वेद यस्य प्राणः शरिरं ।
यः प्राणमन्तरो यमत्येष त आत्मान्तर्याम्यमृतः ॥
yaḥ prāṇe tiṣṭhan prāṇādentaro yaṁ prāṇo na veda yasya
prāṇaḥ śariraṁ |
yaḥ prāṇamantaro yamatyeṣa ta ātmāntaryāmyamrutah ||

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣat III.vI.17)

The intelligent soul is placed in prāṇa, inside the prāṇa, it pervades the prāṇa, yet the non-intelligent are unaware of the it. Prāṇa itself become the body of the chief master, who controls it from the inside. Thus, the soul is immutable, indestructible and immortal.

2.4.2 THE CONCEPT OF PAÑCAPRĀṆA AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

There are five major and five minor divisions of prāṇa described in the traditional texts, each of which is designated to perform specific actions. Viveka cūḍāmaṇi illustrates the composition of subtle layer of human existence

वागादि पञ्च श्रवणादि पञ्चप्राणादि पञ्चाभ्रमुखानि पञ्च ।

बुद्ध्याद्यविद्यापि च कामकर्मणीपुर्यष्टकं सूक्ष्मशरीरमाहुः ॥

Vāgādi pañca śravaṇādi pañcaprāṇādi pañcābhramukhāni
pañca ।

Buddhyādyavidyāpi ca kāmakarmanīpuryaṣṭakaṁ
sūkṣmaśarīramāhuḥ ।

(Vivekacūḍāmaṇi 96)

The five organs of action such as speech etc., the five organs of knowledge beginning with the ear, the group of five prāṇa, Buddhi and the rest, together with Nescience, desire and action these eight 'cites' make up what is called subtler body.

कर्मेन्द्रियैः पञ्चभिरञ्चितोऽयंप्राणो भवेत्प्राणमयस्तु कोशः ॥

येनात्मवानन्नमयोऽनुपूर्णः प्रवर्ततेऽसौ सकलक्रियासु ॥

karmendriyaiḥ pañcabhirañcito'yaṁprāṇo
bhavetprāṇamayastu kośaḥ ॥

yenātmavānannamayo'nupūrṇaḥpravartate'sau sakalakriyāsu

(Vivekacūḍāmaṇi 165)

The prāṇa, with which we are all familiar, coupled with the five organs of action, forms the Vital Sheath, permeated by which the Material Sheath itself in all activities as if it were living.

The division of prāṇa from the mukhya prāṇa is further described in the following verse:

प्राणापानव्यानोदानसमाना भवत्यसौ प्राणः ।
स्वयमेव वृत्तिभेदाद्विकृतिभेदात्सुवर्णसलिलादिवत् ॥
Prāṇāpānavyānodānasamānā bhavatyasau prāṇaḥ ।
Svayameva vṛttibhedādvikṛtibhedātsuvarṇasalilādivat ॥

(Vivekacūḍāmaṇi 95)

The same Prāṇa becomes prāṇa, Apāna, Vyāna, Uḍāna and Samāna according to their diversity of functions and modifications, like gold and water etc.

Praśnopaniṣat describes at length the function of each of the prāṇa.

यथा सम्रादेवाधिकृतान् विनियुङ्क्ते । एतन् ग्रामानोतान्
ग्रामानधितिष्ठस्वेत्येवमेवैष प्राण इतरान् प्राणान् पृथक्पृथगेव सन्निधत्ते ॥
Yathā samrādevādhikṛtān viniyuṅkte । Etan grāmānotān
grāmānadhitiṣṭasvetyevamevaiṣa prāṇa itarān prāṇān pṛthak
pṛthageva sannidhate ॥

(Praśnopaniṣat, 3.4)

As the emperor orders his officials, ‘Do you reside in and rule these villages and those’, so does this (the chief prāṇa), engage the other prāṇa as differently (in different functions).

पायूपस्थेऽपानं चक्षुःश्रोत्रे मुखनासिकाभ्यां प्राणःस्वयं
प्रातिष्ठते मध्ये तु समानः । एष ह्येतद्भुतमन्नं समंनयति
तस्मादेताः सप्तार्चिषो भवन्ति ॥

Pāyūpasthe'pānaṁ cakṣuḥśrotre mukhanāsikābhyāṁ prāṇaḥ
svayamprātiṣṭate madhye tu samānaḥ ।
Eṣahyetaddhutamannaṁ samānayatitasmādetāḥ saptārciṣo
bhavanti ॥

(*Praśnopaniṣat*, 3.5)

The Apāna is in the organs of excretion and the organs of generation. The eye, ear, nose and mouth are governed by the prāṇa itself. In the middle is Samāna, as it distributes the offered food equally to all parts. From it originates the seven flames.

हृदि ह्येष आत्मा । अत्रैतदेकशतं नाडीनं तासां शतं शतमेकैकस्या द्वासप्ततिर्द्वासप्ततिः
प्रतिशाखानाडीसहस्राणि भवन्त्यासु व्यानश्चरति ॥
Hṛdi hyeṣa ātmā । Atraitadekaśataṁ nāḍīnaṁ tāsāṁ śataṁ
śatamekaikasyā dvāsaptatirdvāsaptatiḥ
pratiśākhānāḍīsahasrāṇi bhavantyāsu vyānaścarati ॥

(*Praśnopaniṣat*, 3.6)

In the heart, dwells the atman. There are a hundred and one nāḍis, in each one of them, there are hundred and each one of these branch again has seventy two thousand nāḍis. In all these, Vyāna moves.

अथैकयोर्ध्व उदानः पुण्येन पुण्यं लोकं नयति पापेन पापमुभाभ्यामेव मनुष्यलोकम् ॥

athaikayordhva udānaḥ puṇyena puṇyaṁ lokaṁ nayati
pāpena pāpamubhābhyāmeva manuṣyalokam ॥

(*Praśnopaniṣat*, 3.7)

And then, through one of them, the Uḍāna carries the soul to the virtuous world by virtuous deeds, to the sinful world by the sinful acts, and by both to the world of men.

Figure 1: The Distribution of Pañcaprāṇa in the Human System.

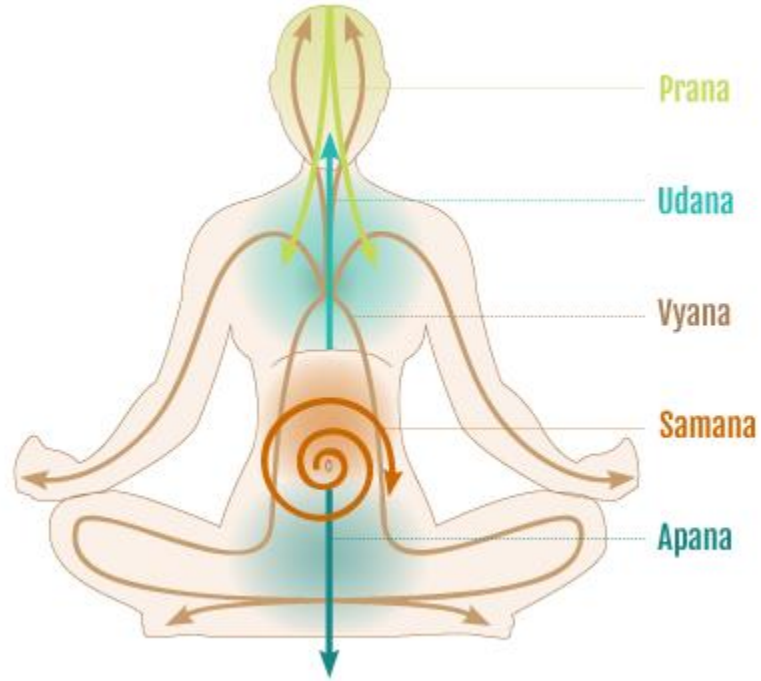


Image Courtesy: <http://sequencewiz.org/2014/09/03/5-vayus/>

Different prāṇas are said to have different colors, as described in the Amritanāda Upaniṣat.

रक्तवर्णो मणिप्रख्यः प्राणवायु प्रकीर्तितः । अपानस्तस्य मध्ये तु इन्द्रकोपसमप्रभः ।
समानस्तु दध्योर्मध्ये गोक्षीरघवलप्रभः । आपाण्डर उदानश्च व्यानो ह्यर्चिसमप्रभः ॥

Raktavarṇo maṇiprakhyaḥ prāṇavāyu prakīrtitaḥ |
Apānastasya madhye tu indrakopasamaprabhaḥ |
Samānastu dhdyormadhye gokṣīradhavalaprabhaḥ |
Āpāṇḍara udānaśca vyāno hyarcisamaprabhaḥ ||

(Amritanāda Upaniṣat. 34-37)

Prāṇa is said to be blood-red, the color of ruby or coral; apāna is the color of Indra-Gopa, (an insect which is white or red in color); samāna is in-between the color of pure milk and crystal (oily and shining); uḍāna is anandara (pale white) and vyasan is the color of archis (a ray of light).

Of all the prāṇas, prāṇa and apāna are considered to be the most influential ones.

The Śiva Samhita states:

अत्रापि वायवः पन्च मुख्याः स्युर्दशतः पुनः ।

तत्रापि श्रेष्ठकर्तारौ प्राणापानौ मयोदितौ ॥

Atrāpi vāyavaḥ panca mukhyāḥ syurdaśataḥ punaḥ |
Tatrāpi śreṣṭhakarttārau prānāpānau mayoditau ||

(Śiva Samhita 3:6)

Out of the ten (major and minor prāṇas), the first five are the leading ones; even among these, Prāṇa and Apāna are the highest agents.

Table 1: The Physical Location and Functions of each of the Prāṇa.

Prāṇa	Physical Location	Function	Related color
Vyāna	Peripheral nervous system, pervades entire body	Circulation, movement	A ray of light
Uḍāna	Throat, upper chest, head	Thought, speech, exhalation, growth, nervous system	Pale white
Prāṇa	Thorax, Heart, Lung	Respiration, functioning of heart, sensory perception	Blood red
Samāna	Navel region	Digestion, absorption, metabolism, homeostasis	Between color of pure milk and crystal
Apāna	Below the navel region	Excretion, reproduction, childbirth, immunity	Color of Indra-Gopa (insect with white or red color)

2.5 CONCEPT OF PRĀṆAYĀMA FROM THE ANCIENT INDIAN LITERATURE

In the path of Yoga, regulation of *prāṇa* is considered of utmost importance and has influence on all aspects of the *sādhaka's* personality. This transformation of *sādhaka* using the breath regulation is because breath regulation is considered to help him absorb and channelize the flow of *Prāṇa*.

The literal meaning of *prāṇayāma*; *prāṇa* is 'vital energy' or 'life force' and *ayāma* is 'to prolong'. In simple terms, *prāṇayāma* is the voluntary regulation (slowing and prolonging) of breathing.

The importance of *prāṇayāma* has been described in various ancient Indian texts. Some important descriptions of *prāṇayāma* in general have been taken from essential texts and are given below.

In *Patañjali Yoga Sūtra*, *prāṇayāma* is defined as:

तस्मिन्सति श्वासप्रश्वासयोर्गतिविच्छेदः प्राणायामः ॥

Tasminsati śvāsapraśvāsayorgativicchedaḥ prāṇāyāmaḥ ॥

(*Patañjala Yoga Sūtra*: 2.49)

"Regulation of breath or the control of *prāṇa* is the stoppage of inhalation and exhalation, which follows after securing that steadiness of posture or seat (*āsana*)" (Mehta, 1990; Saraswati, 2011).

Prāṇayāma, in the real sense according to this aphorism given by sage *Patañjali* means an interruption between inhalation and exhalation (Mehta, 1990). In the technical Yogic terms, inhalation is known as *pūraka*, exhalation as *recaka* and retention as *kumbhaka*. From the above description, it is clear that *kumbhaka* alone constitutes *prāṇayāma*. It is interesting to note here that *Patañjali* does not use the words *recaka* (exhalation), *kumbhaka* (pause) and *pūraka* (inhalation) anywhere in his *sūtras*, although he does refer to these actions, even in the verse given below.

प्रच्छर्दनविधारणाभ्यां वा प्राणस्य ।

Pracchardanavidhāraṇābhyāṃ vā prāṇasya ।

(*Patañjala Yoga Sūtra: 1.34*)

The word *pracchardana*, would always mean expulsion and in this aphorism it refers to breath and not to any subtle psychic force or cosmic element. *Vidhāraṇa* means retention. When all three words *pracchardana*, *vidhāraṇa* and *prāṇa* are taken together, this becomes evident that the word *prāṇa* here refers to breath and breath alone (Kuvalyananda, 1983). In this *sūtra*, *Patañjali* suggested that breathing is one of the measures to control the mind.

बाह्याभ्यन्तरस्तम्भवृत्तिर्देशकालसंख्याभिः परिदृष्टो दीर्घसुकुश्मः ॥

Bāhyābhyantarastambhavṛttirdeśakālasankhyābhiḥ paridr̥ṣṭo
dīrghasukṣmaḥ ॥

(Patañjala Yoga Sūtra: 2.50)

"In *prāṇāyāma* the interval is regulated by place, time and number, and is deep and quiet"(Mehta, 1990).

The perfection in *prāṇāyāma* is achieved when one need not perform the kumbhaka. Such forth type of breathing is stated in the following Sūtra of Patañjali

बाह्याभ्यन्तरविषयाक्षेपी चतुर्थः ॥

Bāhyābhyantaraviṣayākṣepī caturthaḥ ॥

(Patañjala Yoga Sūtra: 2.51)

The forth *prāṇāyāma* is that, which transcends the internal and external object.

The description of such transcended breath is also found in Bhagavad- Gīta where Krishna describes *apāna* should be joined with *prāṇa*.

अपाने जुह्वति प्राणं प्राणेपानं तथापरे ।

प्राणापानगती रूद्ध्वा प्राणायामपरायणाः ॥

apāne juhvati prāṇam prāṇepānam tathāpare |
prāṇāpānagatī rūddhvā prāṇāyāmaparāyaṇāḥ ॥

(Bhagavad- Gīta 4.29)

Yet other offer as sacrifice the outgoing breath in the coming, and the incoming in the outgoing, restraining the flow of the outgoing and incoming breaths, solely absorbed in the life-energy.

2.5.1 METHODOLOGY OF PRACTICE OF PRĀṆĀYĀMA

The inhalation and exhalation in *prāṇāyāma* has to be quiet without making noise.

The methodology about the place, time and number with reference to the retention of breath has been described in other scriptures such as Bhagavad- Gīta and Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā prescribes regulation of body through practice of āsana and diet prior to practice of *prāṇāyāma*.

अथासने द्रुढे योगी वशी हितमिताशनः ।

गुरूपदिष्टमार्गे प्राणायामान्समभ्यसेत् ॥

Athāsane druḍhe yogī vaśī hitamitāśanaḥ।

Gurūpaḍiṣṭamārgē prāṇāyāmānsamabhyaset।।

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.1)

Thus being established in asana and having control (of the body), taking balanced diet; *prāṇāyāma* should be practiced according to the instructions of the Guru.

Bhagavad- Gīta describes the place for practice of *prāṇāyāma*:

शुचौ देशे प्रतिष्ठाप्य स्थिरमासनमात्मनः ।

नात्युच्छ्रितं नातिनीचं चेलाजिनकुशोत्तरम् ॥

Śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthīramāsanamātmanaḥ।

Nātyucchritam nātinīcam celājinakuśottaram।।

(Bhagavad- Gīta 6.11)

Having firmly fixed in clean place, his seat, neither too high nor too low, and having spread over it the kuśa grass, a deer skin and a cloth one over the others.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā emphasized the importance of the regular practice of prāṇāyāma and the purpose of doing it in the following verse:

प्राणायामं ततः कुर्यान्नित्यं सात्त्विकया धिया ।

यथा सुषुम्नानाडीस्था मलाः शुद्धिं प्रयान्ति च ॥

prāṇāyāmaṁ tataḥ kuryānnityaṁ sātvikayā dhiyā |
yathā suṣumnānādīsthā malāḥ śuddhiṁ prayānti ca ||

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.6)

Therefore, prāṇāyāma should be done daily with sattvic state of mind so that the impurities are driven out of the suśumna nādi and until the purification occurs.

The caution about the food habits are also described

अभ्यास-काले प्रथमे शस्तं क्षीराज्य-भोजनम् ।

ततोऽभ्यासे दृढीभूते न तादृङ्-नियम-ग्रहः ॥

abhyāsa-kāle prathame śastaṁ kṣīrajya-bhojanam |
tato'bhyāse dṛḍhībhūte na tādr̥ṅ-niyama-grahaḥ ||

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.14)

In the beginning of stage of practice, food consisting of milk and ghee is recommended. Upon being established in the practice, such restrictions are not necessary.

Svami Svātmārāma further cautions the practitioner to be gradual while practicing Kumbhaka:

यथा सिंहो गजो व्याघ्रो भवेद्वश्यः शनैः शनैः ।

तथैव सेवितो वायुरन्यथा हन्ति साधकम् ॥

yathā simho gajo vyāghro bhavedvaśyaḥ śanaiḥ śanaiḥ ।
tathaiva sevito vāyuranyathā hanti sādhakam ॥

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.15)

Just as lions, elephants and tigers are gradually controlled, so that prāṇa is controlled through practice. Otherwise the practitioner is destroyed.

The gradual process of training in prāṇāyāma is illustrated as

युक्तं युक्तं त्यजेद्वायुं युक्तं युक्तं च पूरयेत् ।

युक्तं युक्तं च बध्नीयादेवं सिद्धिमवाप्नुयात् ॥

yuktaṁ yuktaṁ tyajedvāyuraṁ yuktaṁ yuktaṁ ca pūrayet ।
yuktaṁ yuktaṁ ca badhniyādevaṁ siddhimavāpnuyāt ॥

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.18)

The prāṇa should be skillfully inhaled, exhaled and retained so that mastery can be attained by the practitioner.

Unless the seeker attains perfection, he must practice the kumbhaka multiple times a day:

प्रातर्मध्यन्दिने सायमर्ध-रात्रे च कुम्भकान् ।

शनैरशीति-पर्यन्तं चतुर्वारं समभ्यसेत् ॥

prātarmadhyandine sāyamardha-rātre ca kumbhakān |
śanairaśīti-paryantaṁ caturvāraṁ samabhyaset ||

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.11)

Retention should be practiced perfectly four times a day: early morning, midday, evening and midnight, so that retention is gradually held up to eight counts in one sitting.

Three types of breath regulation are advised in the texts of yoga: recaka (exhalation), pūraka (inhalation) and kumbhaka (retention). They are described as

प्राणायामस्त्रिधा प्रोक्तो रेच-पूरक-कुम्भकैः ।

सहितः केवलश्चेति कुम्भको द्विविधो मतः ॥

prāṇāyāmastridhā prokto reca-pūraka-kumbhakaiḥ |
sahitaḥ kevalaśceti kumbhako dvividho mataḥ ||

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.71)

Prāṇāyāma is said to be of three types, pūraka, recaka and kumbhaka. Kumbhaka is again classified as connected (sahita) and unconnected (kevala).

यावत्केवल-सिद्धिः स्यात्सहितं तावदभ्यसेत् ।

रेचकं पूरकं मुक्त्वा सुखं यद्वायु-धारणम् ॥

yāvatkevala-siddhiḥ syātsahitaṁ tāvadabhyaset ।
recakaṁ pūrakaṁ muktvā sukhaṁ yadvāyu-dhāraṇam ॥

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.72)

Unitl kevala kumbhaka is perfected, sahita kumbhaka has to be practiced. When freed from the inhalation/exhalation, then the breath/ prāṇa is retained easily.

प्राणायामोऽयमित्युक्तः स वै केवल-कुम्भकः ।

कुम्भके केवले सिद्धे रेच-पूरक-वर्जिते ॥

prāṇāyāmo'yamityuktaḥ sa vai kevala-kumbhakaḥ ।
kumbhake kevale siddhe reca-pūraka-varjite ॥

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.73)

Perfection of isolated retention is freedom from inhalation and exhalation. This prāṇāyāma is verily spoken as kevala kumbhaka.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā describes the practice of prāṇāyāma in the form of kumbhaka, emphasizing the eight sets of practices to be performed by a seeker.

अथ कुम्भक-भेदाः ।

सूर्य-भेदनमुज्जायी सीत्कारी शीतली तथा ।

भस्त्रिका भ्रामरी मूर्च्छा प्लाविनीत्यष्ट-कुम्भकाः ॥

atha kumbhaka-bhedāḥ ।

sūrya-bhedanamujjāyī sītkārī śītalī tathā ।

bhastrikā bhrāmarī mūrccā plāvinītyaṣṭa-kumbhakāḥ ॥

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.44)

The eight kumbhakas are sūryabhedana, ujjāyī, sītkārī, śītalī, bhastrika, bhrāmharī, mūrccā and plāvinī.

2.5.2 EFFECTS OF PRACTICE OF PRĀṆĀYĀMA

The connection of the flow of prāṇa and mind is keenly observed by the sages and thus the modification of one alters the other one.

चले वाते चलं चित्तं निश्चले निश्चलं भवेत् ॥

योगी स्थाणुत्वमाप्नोति ततो वायुं निरोधयेत् ॥

cale vāte calaṃ cittam niścale niścalaṃ bhavet ॥
yogī sthāṇutvamāpnoti tato vāyurṃ nirodhayet ॥

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.2)

When the prāṇa moves, the citta (consciousness moves), when prāṇa is without movement, citta is also without movement.

तत्सिद्धये विधानज्ञाश्चित्रान्कुर्वन्ति कुम्भकान् ।

विचित्र कुम्भकाभ्यासाद्विचित्रां सिद्धिमाप्नुयात् ॥

tat-siddhaye vidhānajñāścitrāṅkurvanti kumbhakān |
vicitra kumbhakābhyāsādvicitrāṃ siddhimāpnuyāt ॥

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.43)

By practicing the various kumbhakas, wondrous perfections are attained. Those who are the knowers practice various kumbhakas to accomplish them.

The practice of prāṇāyāma is known to help the practitioner to attain state of good health, but the wrong practice may lead to health implications.

प्राणायामेन युक्तेन सर्व-रोग-क्षयो भवेत् ।

अयुक्ताभ्यास-योगेन सर्व-रोग-समुद्गमः ॥

prāṇāyāmena yuktena sarva-roga-kṣayo bhavet ।
ayuktābhyāsa-yogena sarva-roga-samudgamaḥ ॥

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.16)

By proper practice of prāṇāyāma, all diseases are eradicated. Through improper practice, all diseases can arise.

यथेष्टं धारणं वायोरनलस्य प्रदीपनम् ।

नादाभिव्यक्तिरोग्यं जायते नाडि-शोधनात् ॥

yatheṣṭam dhāraṇam vāyورانالasya pradīpanam ।
nādābhivyaktirārogyam jāyate nāḍi-śodhanāt ॥

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.20)

When one is able to hold the vāyu according to one's will, the digestive power increases. With the nādis purified, thus the inner sound awakens and one is free from diseases.

Prāṇāyāma is considered as a powerful tool in the sadhana. Some of the sages consider prāṇāyāma as the supreme method of purification of the body and mind.

प्राणायामैरेव सर्वे प्रशुष्यन्ति मला इति ।
आचार्याणां तु केषांचिदन्यत्कर्म न संमतम् ॥
prāṇāyāmaireva sarve praśuṣyanti malā iti ।
ācāryāṇāṃ tu keṣāñcidanyatkarma na sammatam ॥

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.37)

According to some teachers, prāṇāyāma alone removes the impurities and therefore they hold prāṇāyāma in esteem and not the other techniques.

Spiritual and health benefits of practice of prāṇāyāma are further explained as

अपानमूर्ध्वमुत्थाप्य प्राणं कण्ठादधो नयेत् ।
योगी जरा-विमुक्तः सन्षोडशाब्द-वया भवेत् ॥
apānamūrdhvamutthāpya prāṇaṃ kaṅṭhādadhō nayet ।
yogī jarā-vimuktaḥ sanṣoḍaśābda-vayā bhavet ॥

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.47)

Raising the apāna upwards and bringing the prāṇa down from the throat, the yogic becomes free from old age and appears as if sixteen years of age.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā describes awakening of *Kundalini* as one of the effects of systematic practice of *Kumbhaka*

विधिवत्प्राण-संयामैर्नाडी-चक्रे विशोधिते ।

सुषुम्णा-वदनं भित्त्वा सुखाद्विशति मारुतः ॥

vidhivatprāṇa-saṁyāmairnāḍī-cakre viśodhite ।
suṣumṇā-vadanam bhittvā sukhādvīśati mārutaḥ ॥

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.41)

By systematically restraining the prāṇa (breath), the nādis and cakras are purified.

Thus the prāṇa bursts open the doorway to suṣumna and easily enters in it.

Swami Swatmarama further describes that when one achieves perfection in retention of breath, he can achieve anything in the world.

न तस्य दुर्लभं किञ्चित्त्रिषु लोकेषु विद्यते ।

शक्तः केवल-कुम्भेन यथेष्टं वायु-धारणात् ॥

na tasya durlabham kiñcitrīṣu lokeṣu vidyate ।
śaktaḥ kevala-kumbhena yatheṣṭam vāyu-dhāraṇāt ॥

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.74)

Nothing in the three planes of existence is unobtainable by him who has mastery of kevala kumbhaka and can retain the breath as desired.

The ultimate effect of practice of kevala kumbhaka is illustrated as

कुम्भक-प्राण-रोधान्ते कुर्याच्चित्तं निराश्रयम् ।

एवमभ्यास-योगेन राज-योग-पदं व्रजेत् ॥

kumbhaka-prāṇa-rodhānte kuryāccittam nirāśrayam ।
evamabhyāsa-yogena rāja-yoga-padam vrajet ॥

(Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.77)

By stopping of prāṇa through the retention, the mind becomes free from all modifications. By thus practicing, one achieves the stage of rāja yoga (supreme union).

Maharshi Patañjali also described the effect of mastery of the practice of prāṇāyāma as self-illumination in this sūtra:

ततः क्षीयते प्रकाशावरणम् ॥

tataḥ kṣīyate prakāśāvaraṇam ॥

(Patañjala Yoga Sūtra: 2.52)

Thereby the covering of the light disappears.

He also describes that one becomes able for the practice of meditation through the practice of prāṇāyāma:

धारणासु च योग्यता मनसः ॥

dhāraṇāsu ca योग्यता मनसः ॥

(Patañjala Yoga Sūtra: 2.53)

And fitness of the mind for concentration (is achieved through the practice of prāṇāyāma).

2.6 SUMMARY

The Literature review on prāṇā and prāṇāyāma imply that the origin of life is due to manifestation of prāṇā through the mind. Due to its role in the manifestation and maintenance of life, prāṇā is considered holy and is worshiped. Various scriptures describe the importance of prāṇā and the division of it. The functions of each of the divisions of prāṇā have been elaborated in detail. Among the five major facets of prāṇā, the mukhya prāṇā and apāna are considered to be the most vital ones and their union is considered to be of great spiritual significance. Prāṇā is also manifested physically through the process of breathing.

Prāṇāyāma or breath regulation is considered one of the most important yogic practices. The process of prāṇāyāma is described in detail along with the preparation, methodology of practice as well as the benefits of the practice. The process of holding the breath (*kumbhaka*) is considered of the highest importance within the practice of prāṇāyāma. The review reveals that breath retention is a systematic process of regulating body and mind. Various methodologies of breath holding are described with clear indications of their benefits and limitations, if any. The practice of breath retention is considered to be of greatest spiritual significance, enabling the practitioner to practice meditation, and leading to self-illumination.