

Bringing Ancient Pranayama Wisdom with modern Evidence -Based living

(Demonstrated through how Allergic Rhinitis can be cured with Ancient Pranayama Wisdom)

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Abstract - As a yoga practitioner and living in the Allergy capital of India, Bengaluru - where 30% of the city population is affected by allergic rhinitis, especially with increasing cases in kids I decided to learn and apply pranayama wisdom to my own life. This wisdom is not restricted to only breathing exercises but extends to the age-old wisdom of yogic lifestyle and mindset which teaches us that breath is not just taking air in, it is life, awareness and healing power moving within us. A hyper-active human immune system may result in Allergic Rhinitis as the human body overreacts to harmless substances just like it would react to harmful elements. There are two types of Allergic Rhinitis: Seasonal and Perennial. As per ancient wisdom, we can master the mind by mastering the breath. Pranayama is a great practice that can help one master the breath and there by instilling the mind-body discipline. In this paper, we will discuss about how ancient pranayama wisdom helped a corporate professional to adapt to changing and modern lifestyle. It helped in reducing medicines requirement and cope with daily life challenges with daily practice and belief in yoga.

Key Words: Allergic Rhinitis, Allergy, Pranayama, Breathing Exercise

1. INTRODUCTION

1. What is Allergic Rhinitis and how pranayama wisdom can help

Allergic rhinitis (AR) is a prevalent chronic respiratory condition caused by IgE-mediated hypersensitivity to environmental allergens. It manifests through nasal obstruction, sneezing, rhinorrhea, and itching, affecting sleep, concentration, and quality of life. While pharmacotherapy offers symptomatic relief, long-term control remains challenging due to side effects and poor adherence. Yoga and Pranayama, an ancient mind-body discipline, is increasingly studied for its potential benefits in respiratory and immune regulation. This paper explores Pranayama as a complementary approach to controlling and potentially alleviating allergic rhinitis.

1.1 Increasing cases of allergies in Bengaluru and its reasons

Table -1: Evidence showing continuous increase in Allergic Rhinitis

| Resource Type | Source/Study | Finding |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| National Study | Int. Journal of Otorhinolaryngology | Highlights a prevalence of 20-30% in India |
| Local Study | J. of Laryngology & Otology | Identifies Parthenium as one of the top allergens in Bengaluru. |
| Long-term Data | Dr. H. Paramesh / Lakeside Hospital | Documented the rise of allergies in Bengaluru over 30 years. |
| Global Study | ISAAC Phase III | High urban prevalence in Indian metros like Bengaluru. |

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1.2 Current Conventional Treatments and Limitations

The current prevalent approach to manage Allergic Rhinitis includes therapies such as oral anti-allergic medication, steroids based nasal sprays, and leukotriene modifiers. Such approach leads to issues like side effects of medicines, lethargy, patients not adhering to treatment plan and financial burden. This results in the need for holistic and sustainable alternate therapies.

1.3 Yoga as a Therapeutic System

This section introduces yoga philosophy and its components—*asanas*, *pranayama*, *kriyas* (cleansing practices), and meditation. It then explains how these practices influence autonomic nervous system (ANS), reduce systemic inflammation, clearance of nasal airway, and control of immune response.

1. Cleansing *kriyas* (e.g., Jala Neti)
2. Breathing exercises (e.g., Surya Bhedna, Bhramari) that revive and calm the nerves and clean the sinuses
3. Relevant *asanas* (e.g., Bhujangasana, Setu Bandhasana), and relaxation techniques (Yoga Nidra, mindfulness).
 - *Safety considerations and adaptations for different age groups.*
 - *Safety keeping in mind other physical restriction.*

1.3.1 The Prasnopanishad - Pranayama, the most ancient wisdom discussed in Prasnopanishad

The Prasna Upanishad is one of the most important texts for understanding Prana in our cultural heritage. A significant portion of the Upanishad is allocated to discussion on the nature, origin, and functions of the life force. In this Upanishad, there are six seekers and they ask a question each. The second and third questions in particular focus on Prana, exalting it from simple "breath" to the cosmic energy that sustains the universe.

The Supremacy of Prana (The Second Question)

The second seeker, Bhargava, asks: "How many gods support the body? Which of them is the greatest?". The sage Pippalada explains that while the elements (space, air, fire, water, earth) and the senses (mind, speech, sight, hearing) all claim to support the body, Prana is the supreme pillar.

Pranayama exerts therapeutic effects through autonomic nervous system rebalancing, improved mucociliary clearance and enhanced respiratory muscle function.

2. Specific cases of treatment of allergy rhinitis

2.1 Case 1: Female 35 years old, Bengaluru

2.1.1 History - The subject had no prior history of allergy or specific symptoms. The allergic symptoms started only after moving to Bengaluru.

2.1.2 Symptoms – Continuous sneezing and watery eyes resulting in nose blockage and headache

2.1.3 Initial treatment – Allopathic treatment through anti-allergy medicines and nasal sprays. The medicines were needed on daily basis during the months of July to December. This resulted in fatigue, low energy and overall lethargy.

2.1.4 Allergy management through Yoga and pranayama – A combination of chest opening *asanas*, like Ustrasana,

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Virabhadrasana, sequences like Surya Namaskar, pelvic movement exercise, and Pranayama, performed daily over a period of 3 months, controlled allergic reaction through opening of nasal pathways, stronger natural immune system, and regulation of body temperature in the face sudden temperature changes. The subject requires minimal medication now.

2.2 Case 2: Kid 8 years old, Bengaluru

2.1.1 History – The subject was a per-term baby. There was also a family history of allergy. The kid had swollen adenoids, deficiency of Iron, Vitamin D, and Calcium.

2.1.2 Symptoms – Loud snoring, difficulty in breathing, cold and cough, (lasting for long) and sleep apnea

2.1.3 Initial treatment – Nasal spray to shrink adenoids.

2.1.4 Allergy management through Yoga and pranayama – In this case allergic rhinitis was not the cause but the result of swollen adenoids. Yoga helped the subject to avoid sudden onset of cough and cold due to weather changes. The subject also learnt to manage breathing during play times through Pranayama. But the subject had to undergo medical intervention in the form of adenoids surgery as the condition was identified in grade III. Early intervention through Yoga and Pranayama would have helped stopping the progression.

2.1 Case 3 : Twin brothers, Bengaluru

2.1.1 History - The allergic symptoms started right from when they were 3 months old. They had family history of allergy and asthma.

2.1.2 Symptoms – Continuous wheezing and shortness of breath.

2.1.3 Initial treatment – Allopathic treatment through nasal sprays. The medicines were needed on a daily basis.

2.1.4 Allergy management through Yoga and pranayama – The subjects started yoga at the age of 7 years. Now after one and half years of yoga and breathing exercise resulted in a gradual decline of medicines to half of that prescribed in the beginning.

3. Conclusion

Pranayama offers a holistic approach to the management of allergic rhinitis. Its all-encompassing influence on autonomic balance, immune modulation, and respiratory function suggests a tremendous potential for controlling symptoms over a longer term and improve quality of life and overall health. Integrating yoga and Pranayama practice with modern medical treatment may provide a comprehensive, patient centric allergy management protocol.

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