



**A Week of Pranayama June 7th-11th, 2021**

Prana and mind arise from the same source. The source can be reached by holding the breath or tracing the mind. If you cannot do the latter the former will no doubt be helpful. Regulation of breath is gained by watching its movements. If the mind is watched thoughts cease. Peace results and it is your true nature. The perturbation owing to thoughts appears to rob the Self of its peace. The perturbation is the mind. When that ceases the mind is said to take flight. The Self remains as the undisturbed substratum.

**Ramana Maharshi, 17th January, 1937**

**DAY 1**

The practices we are doing come from **Hinduism**, and are practices absorbed into and elaborated in the Yogic traditions called **Pranayama**

**Prana** means our subtle life force, **ayama** means to lengthen, expand, or voluntarily control

**Prana** also means vital energy; **pranayama** is thus to expand our vital energy through extending our breath

**Prana** on a macro scale is the energy and fabric of the universe, of manifestation

**Prana** on a micro scale is the energy that powers all life matter. It is contained in food, in the air, in water, the soil, and sunlight

In humans, **Prana** is both the subtle energy of the mind, and the gross power of breath, and the energetic value of the sense organs.

**Prana** and mind are said to be two wings of the same bird

## **Breathing directed towards:**

The abdominal cavity

The lower side ribs

The olfactory nerves

## **Jalandhara bandha**

Inhale, lock chin, lift, exhale

## **Asvini Mudra**

Squeeze and release the anal sphincter

## **Ujjayi Pranayama**

8-8

8-16

8-8-16

8-16-16

## **Kapalabhati + Surya Bhedana**

30 pumpings, inhale right, exhale right

8-8

8-16

8-8-16

8-16-16

## **16 Adharas**

Meditate on each while resting  
Toes, ankles, shins, calves, knees, thighs, anus, center of body, genitals, navel, heart center, base of the throat, soft palate, bridge of nose, eyeballs, between the eyes, fontanelle

**DAY 2**

In our nervous system, prana controls all vital life processes such as digestion, circulation, respiration, elimination, etc.

Breathing is the main activity of prana that can be voluntarily or directly controlled by us.

We can indirectly control or support digestion and elimination through how and when we eat, or circulation through exercise, but breath is in our direct access.

Breathing is a function of the nervous system, so by controlling the breath we access a measure of control over the nervous system

The nervous system is a part of what influences our changing mental states

Therefore, to control prana through breathing is to begin to control the nervous system and our thoughts

The effect of breathing high in the nasal cavity is to draw the awareness to the nose as the principle organ of respiration, and move the focus away from the lungs, the organ of gas exchange.

The olfactory nerves form from a direct line of brain cells that come out of the skull into the nose. The olfactory bulb The olfactory bulb communicates with the areas of the brain where memory and fear are processed.

In the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, a 15<sup>th</sup> century yoga text, there is a verse that says “***Chale vate chalam chittam nischale nischalem bhavet***; When the breath moves, the mind moves. When the breath is still, the mind is still.”

Pranayama is a voluntary and temporary modulating of the breath in order to eventually control the way our minds function, or our thoughts, and calm the nervous system

Controlled breathing is like how a speed bump in the road slows us down

Inhalation is our accelerator, exhalation is our brake. When things are going too fast it's not that we have an acceleration problem, it's that the brake is temporarily impaired.



## **Resonance 4 minutes:**

The olfactory nerves

The lower side ribs

The abdominal cavity

Free

## **Uddiyana Kriya x 3**

## **Asvini Mudra 3 x 10**

Squeeze and release the anal sphincter

## **Kapalabhati w/ Ujjayi Pranayama**

Inhale both, exhale left

8-8

## **Bhastrika x 3**

16 times; exhale and pause

## **Nadi Shodana 1:2 ratio**

Pause between rounds

## **16 Adharas**

Meditate on each while resting

Toes, ankles, shins, calves, knees,

thighs, anus, center of body,

genitals, navel, heart center, base of

the throat, soft palate, bridge of

nose, eyeballs, between the eyes,

fontanelle

**DAY 3**

There are eight, classical pranayamas that are taught, each are called kumbhakas: surya bhedana, ujjayi, sitakari, sheetali, bhastrika, bhramari, plavini, murccha.

The holding of the breath is always the same, but the way you inhale or exhale will change for the different pranayamas

We are starting with practices that adjust the ratio, or length of time that we are breathing, and the different ways that we can inhale and exhale (like through single nostrils, for example) before we begin holding the breath.

Why do we breath through one nostril at a time?

Of the many patterns we have in our body, the circadian rhythm is the most well known, as our wake and sleep cycle.

A lesser known rhythm are the ultradian rhythms, which occur in less than a 24 hour time period. These include sleep phase cycles, blood circulation, blinking, pulse, hormonal secretions (such as growth hormone), heart rate, appetite, and nostril dilation.

Every 90-120 minutes the we experience something called a change in nostril dilation, or nostril dominance.

The nostrils are innervated with a tremendous amount of sympathetic and parasympathetic nerves. They undergo something called vasodilation and vasoconstriction through out the day, which means there is either increased or decreased blood flow under the influence of the sympathetic, for decreased, and parasympathetic for increased.

In the nose vasodilation will occlude the nostril by the mucous membranes becoming congested. The opposite nostril will undergo vasoconstriction, with less blood flow, so that nostril is not constricted and there is greater airflow. This is a natural, bodily rhythm.

By breathing through one nostril at a time, we are stimulating the ANS endings within the nose, and those are sending direct signals back to the brain. The Yogis have an entire science of breath based on nostril dominance, called *swara*.

The right nostril is considered to be our active energy, and the left is receptive

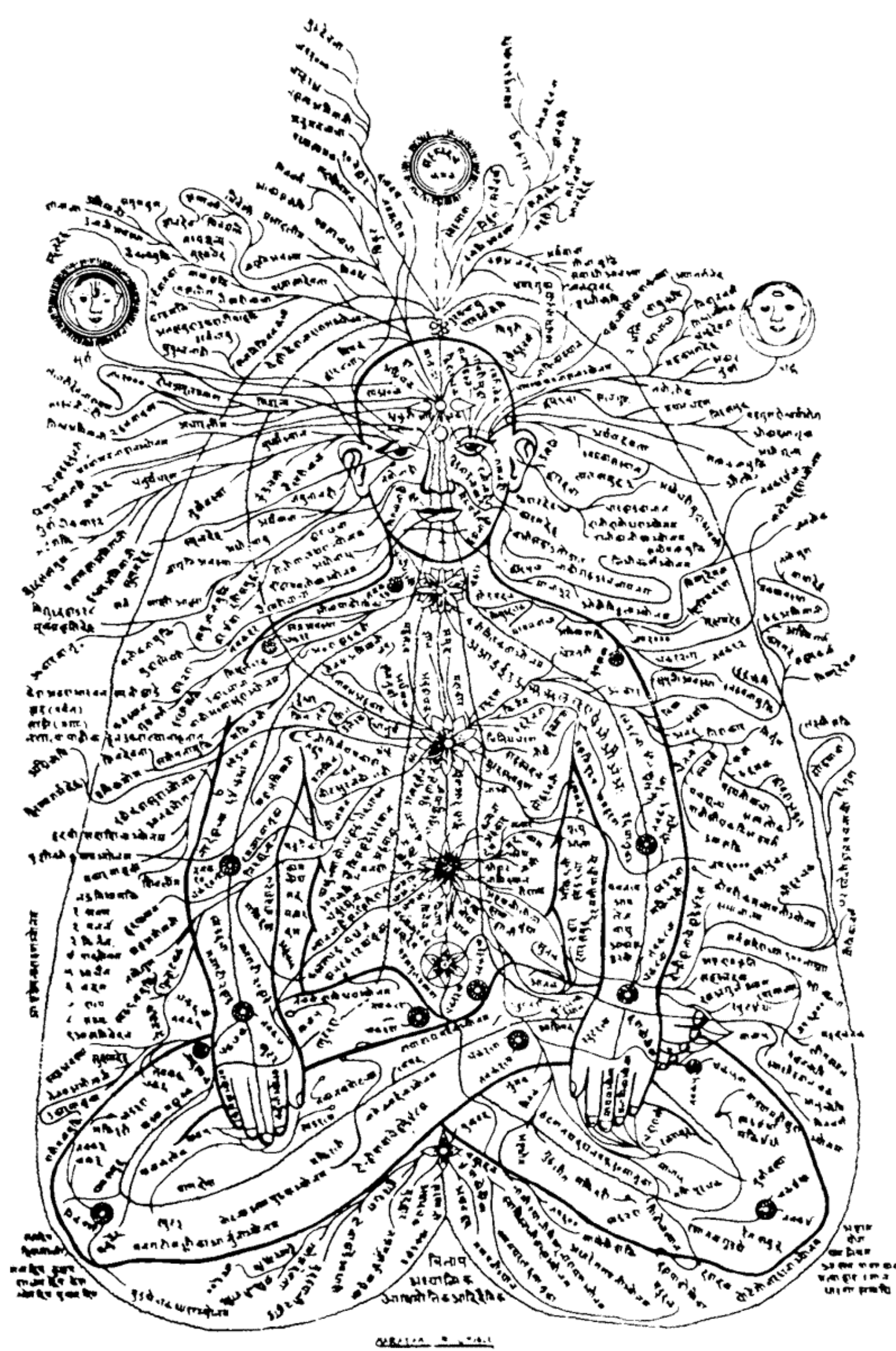
These are called ida (left) and pingala (right), or surya and chandra

There is some evidence that breathing through one nostril at a time positively effects brain function and can help to normalize blood pressure.

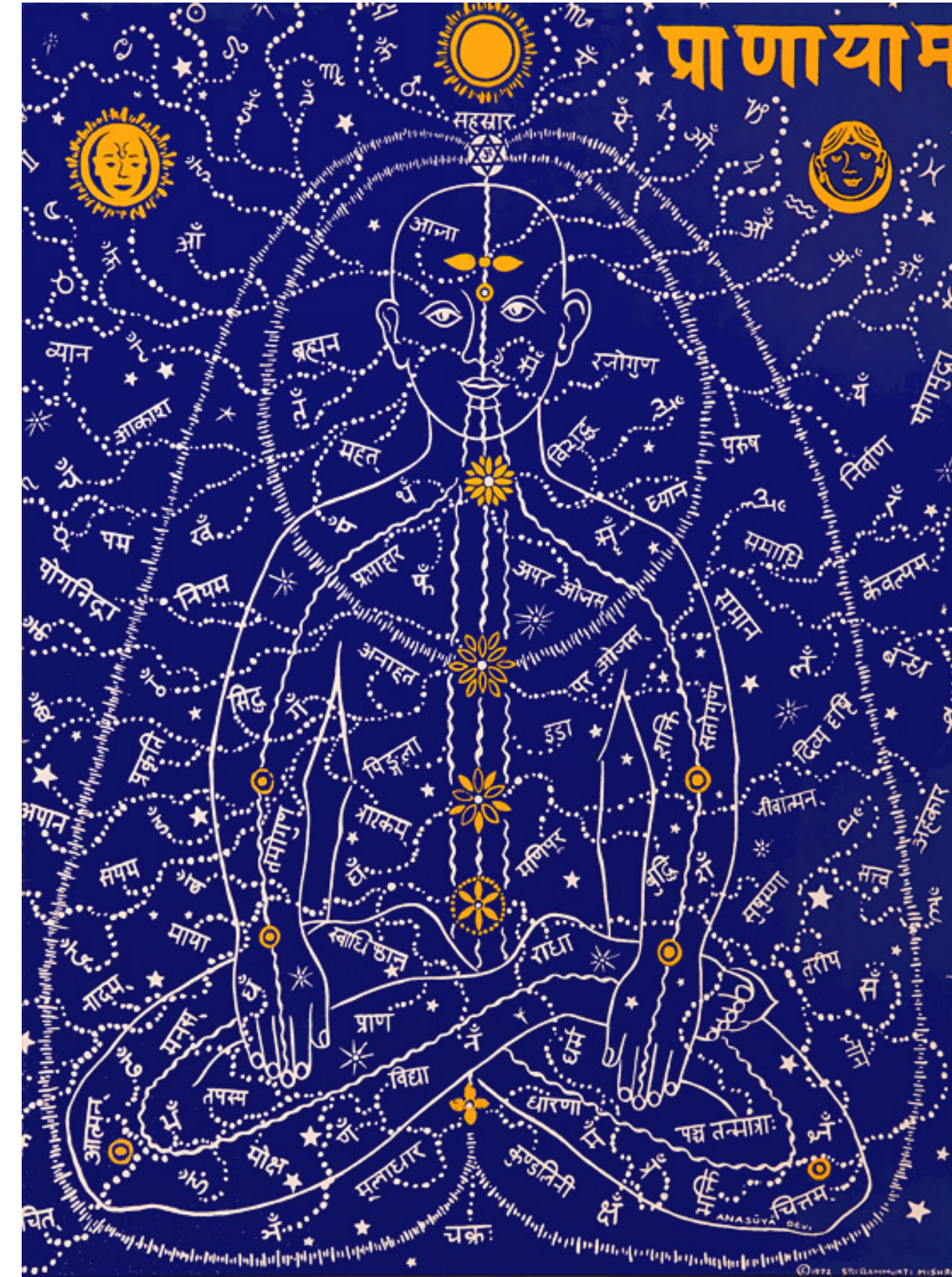
There is also evidence that single nostril breathing can heighten vigilance without putting the body into a sympathetic activation.

Some smaller studies have shown that activity in the cerebral hemispheres of the brain are associated with nostril dominance, and are contralateral to the nostrils. Controlled breathing through the left nostril stimulates the right hemisphere, and controlled breathing through the right nostril stimulates the right hemisphere.

Ida, Chandra



Pingala, Surya



Sushumna

The Yogis said that asanas, pranayama and meditation help to purify or untie the knots that occur in our energy body and prevent the free flow of prana. These are called granthis.

A knot in the energy body can be as simple as thinking about stress. When we are stressed, we feel tight, constricted, blocked, and stuck. When we release stress, we feel free and unconstricted again, and we feel like we can flow with life.

So thinking about the ideas of the Yogis does not need to be magical thinking; much of it is very practical.

## **Resonance 6 minutes:**

Both nostrils

Left nostril

Right nostril

## **Uddiyana Kriya x 3**

## **Asvini Mudra 3 x 10**

Squeeze and release the anal sphincter

## **Kapalabhati w/ Ujjayi Pranayama**

Inhale both, exhale left

## **Bhastrika x 3**

16 times; exhale and pause

## **Nadi Shodana 1:2 ratio**

Pause between rounds

## **16 Adharas**

Meditate on each while resting  
Toes, ankles, shins, calves, knees,  
thighs, anus, center of body,  
genitals, navel, heart center, base of  
the throat, soft palate, bridge of  
nose, eyeballs, between the eyes,  
fontanelle



**DAY 4**

# **Sample Daily Practice + Some Resources**

**Uddiyana Kriya x 3**  
**Agnisara x 3**

**Kapalabhati w/ Ujjayi Pranayama**  
**50-100 pumpings x 3**  
Inhale both, exhale left

**Resonance 8 minutes:**  
Both nostrils  
Left nostril  
Right nostril  
Alternate nostril

**Bhastrika x 3 with Surya**  
**Bhedana**  
1:2 ratio

**Kapola Shakti Vardhana x 3**  
Inhale through kaki mudra,  
retain with jalandhara bandha  
exhale nose

**Bhramari x 5**  
1:2 ratio

**Nadi Shodana 1:2 ratio**  
Pause between rounds

**16 Adharas**

## **Benefits of the Practices**

### **Uddiyana Kriya and Agnisara**

Abdominal health, stimulates microbiome and gut-brain axis

### **Resonance breathing**

Balances the branches of the autonomic nervous system

### **Kapalabhati**

Encourages blood circulation to the brain and glymphatic drainage

### **Bhastrika**

Balances the three doshas  
Blows of CO<sub>2</sub>  
Improves O<sub>2</sub> uptakes

### **Kapola Shakti Vardhana**

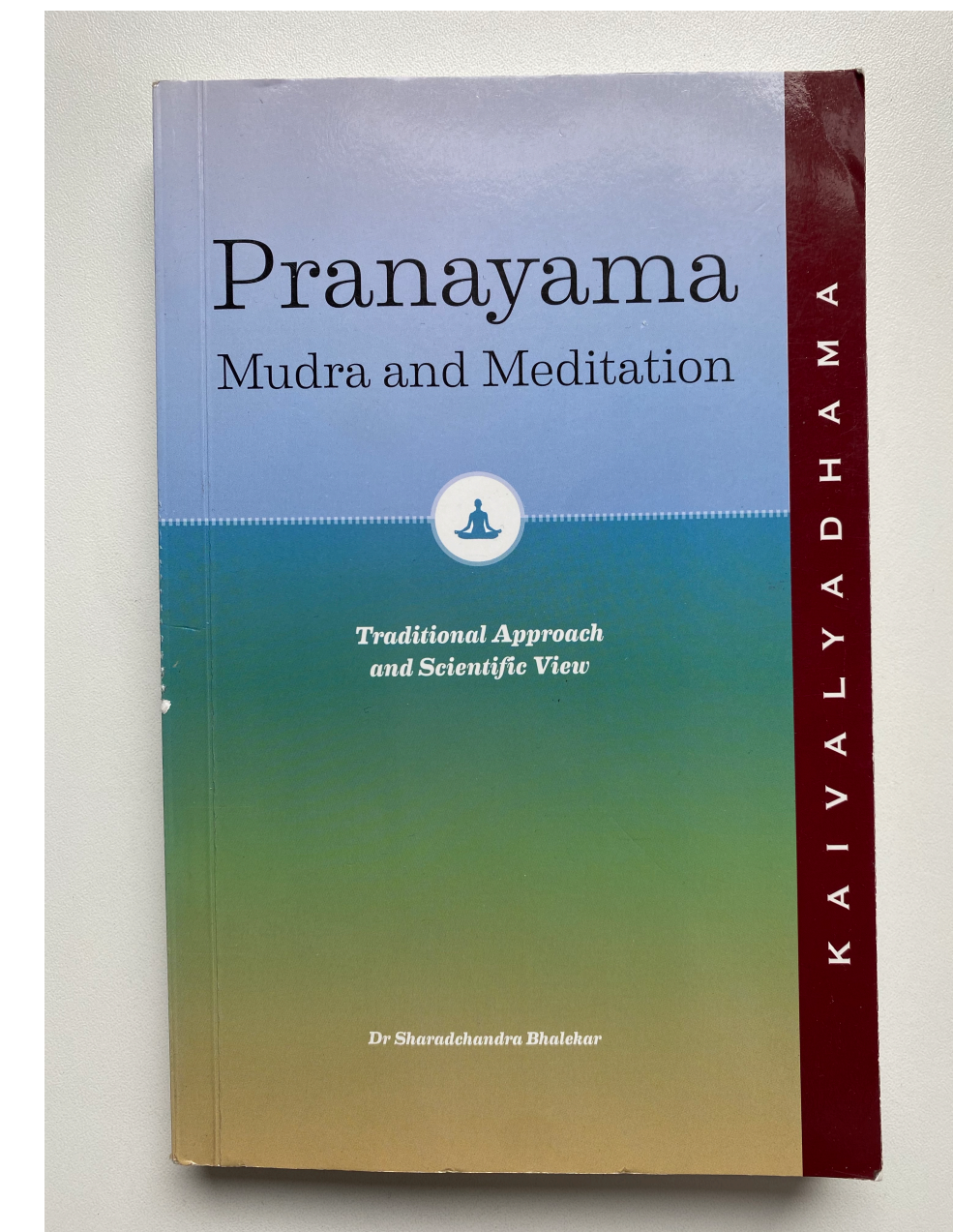
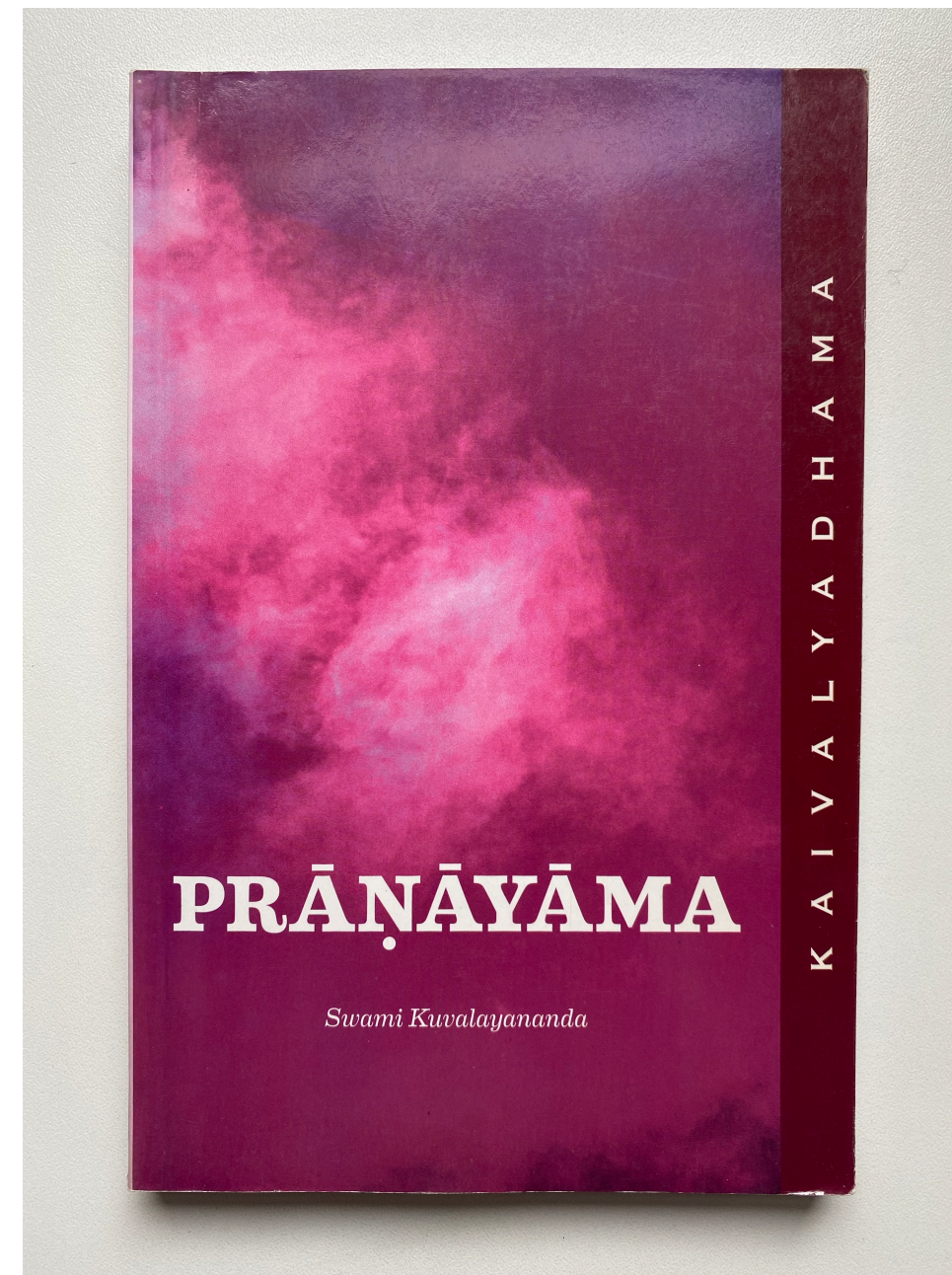
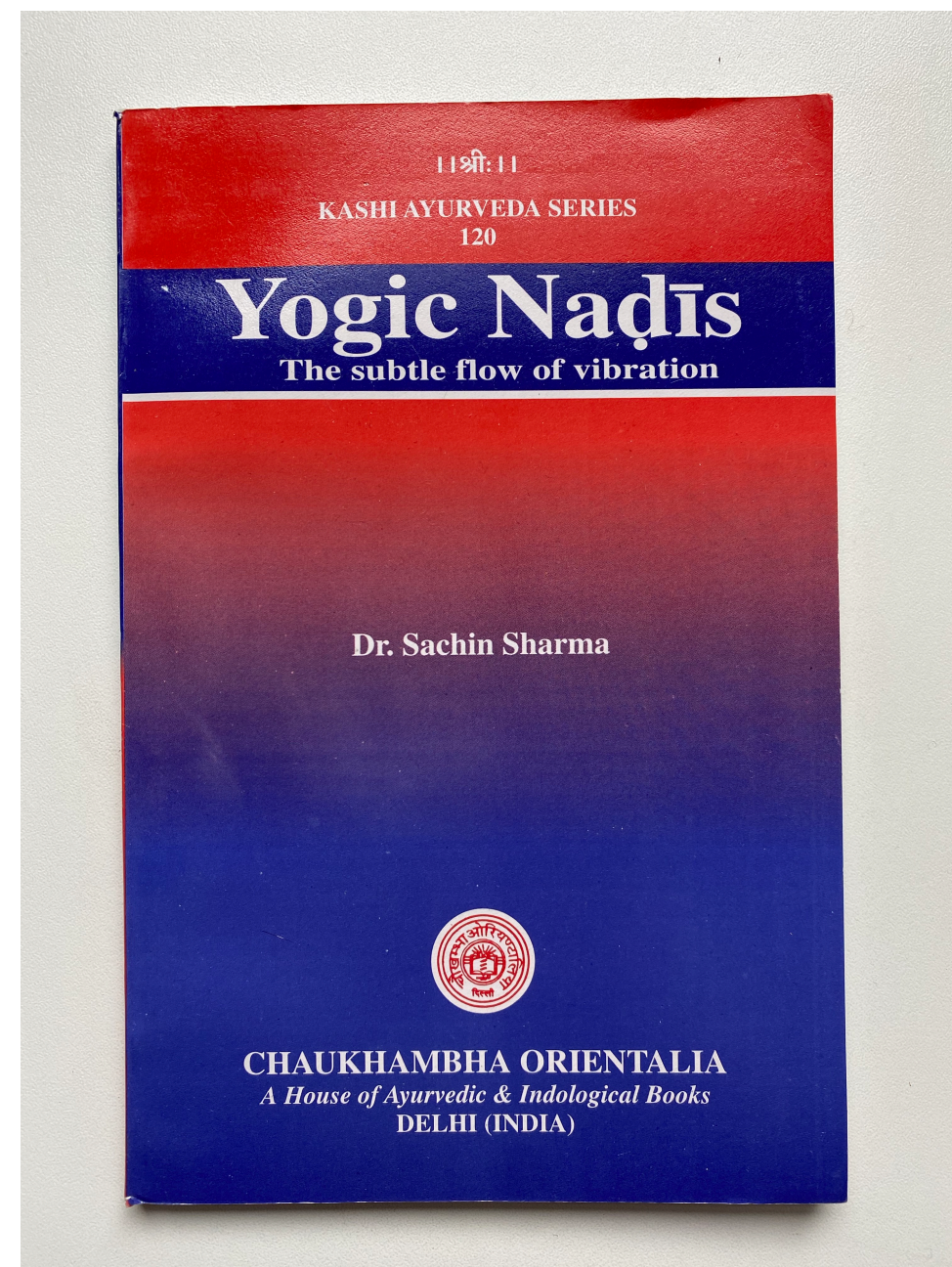
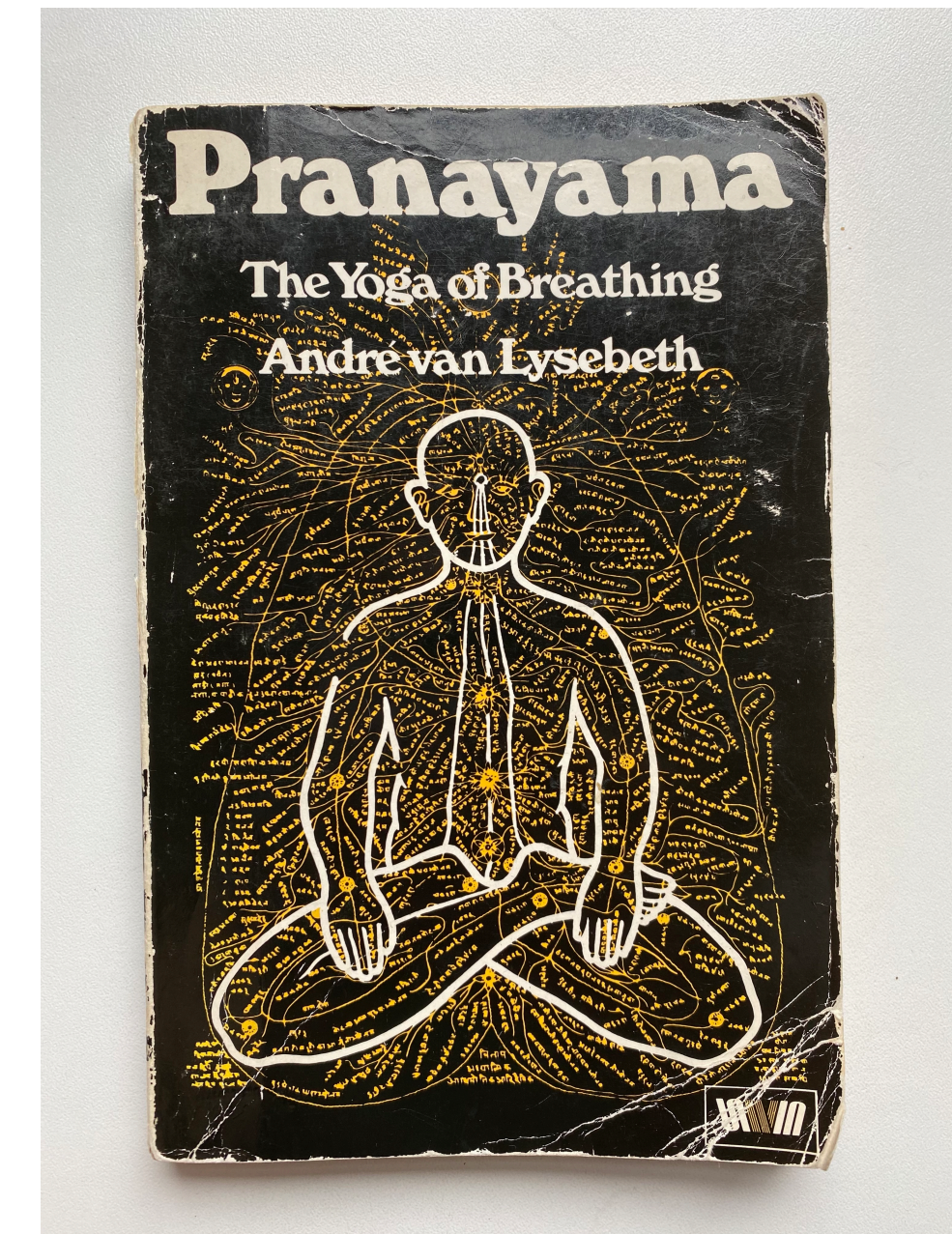
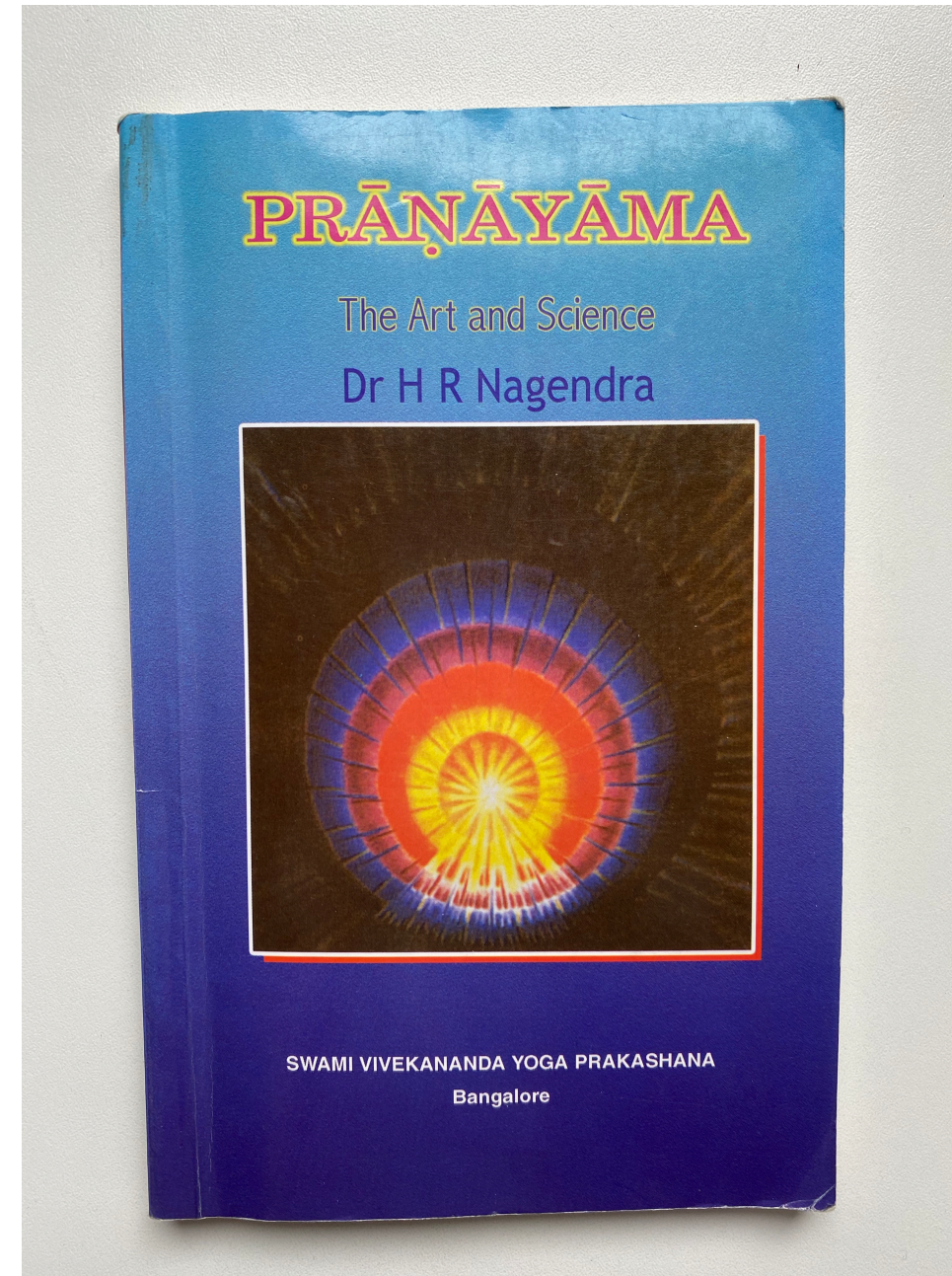
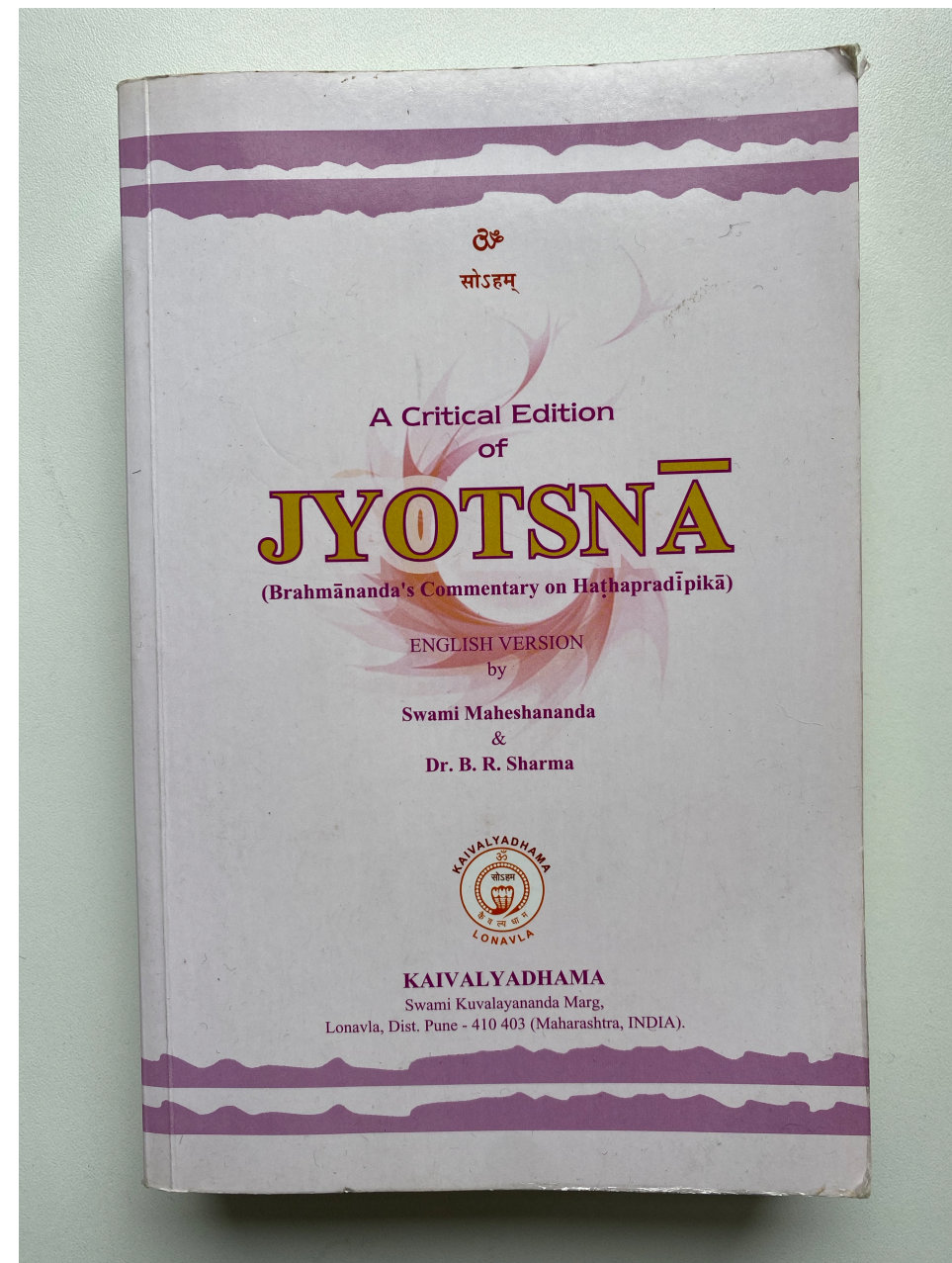
Opens the apex of the lungs

### **Bhramari**

Generates Nitric Oxide, calms the brain, balances blood pressure

### **16 Adharas**

Assimilates and absorbs the increase of prana into the conjunction points of the body



## Additional learning sources

Online learning with Robert Moses

[www.namarupa.org](http://www.namarupa.org)

Online learning with Harshvardhan Jhaveri

@yogatman