

## PRANA

Translating prâna as "life breath" rather than "breath" goes some way towards indicating its broader dimension. Prâna is the power within breath and the vital force in every being'. As cosmic energy, it pervades everything. It is a vital substance not yet covered by scientific classification, though it should be noted that the modern physicists " discovery that all is energy "recalls statements on the origins of the universe and its evolution made by Yogic philosophers many centuries ago. Prâna is the life-force within and about us.

It operates in the working of our respiration, circulation, digestion, and other body processes, and is at the same time the universal life-force in which we share. An ocean of energy is at our disposal and through Yoga we can learn how to tap it.

VIVEKANANDA , in his Raja Yoga, expressed this concept with characteristic eloquence:

In an ocean there are huge waves, then smaller waves, and still smaller, down to little bubbles; but back of all these is an infinite ocean. The bubble is connected with the infinite ocean at one

end, and the huge wave at the other end. So, one may be a gigantic man, and another a little bubble, but each is connected with that infinite ocean of energy which is the common birthright of every animal that exists.

Wherever there is life, the storehouse of that infinite energy is behind Air is strongly charged with prana, and it is potently present in sunlight and in the foods we eat, especially those that are sun-ripened. Air being the most vital of all foods, improved breathing methods mean a richer supply of Prana, that is, of life itself. Disease is unlikely to gain a hold in a body whose tissues and organs are charged with Prana.

These, coiled and latent, are sources of physiological and psychic power, which pranayama helps to activate. This comes within the practice of Kundalini Yoga, also called Laya Yoga, which will be discussed in a later section.

In Yogic breathing, prâna - both as breath and as vital cosmic force - is gathered and utilized to physiological, mental, and spiritual advantage. The spiritual side is only a peripheral concern of Yoga of Vitality, but one is reminded of it by Tennyson's words, 'Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.'

The poet was referring to the personal God of Christianity, but for the pure Yoga of the Upanishads one must substitute Brahman, the impersonal Absolute, in pure consciousness the ground of Being.

In breathing we make our most intimate contact with the cosmic life force, which is why the Yogis consider breath control to be of primary importance, and why breath is given dominion over the senses and other physiological processes in Yoga's classic texts and in the sublime Upanishads.

However, when certain exceptional conditions are met, it can take a condensed form likely to fall under our senses. At sight, it then appears sometimes in the form of a kind of opaline and slightly phosphorescent material, as in metapsychic experiments of materialization, sometimes as a colored fog of bright blue, red, green or yellow hues. In this condensed form, Prana is seen by the Toucher as a weakly resistant and elastic substance. The Prana can still be manifested by noises, for example by blows that seem to be hit on material objects or, more rarely, by smells reminiscent of ozone. These phenomena, always discussed, are well known to spiritualists.

But in addition to the meanings of the classic list, we have others to which no organic receptor corresponds and whose data generally remains subconscious. However, in some cases, they may become conscious. These are strictly speaking psychic senses. When they pass to consciousness, they make us perceive, with our eyes closed or in total darkness, lights of varying brightness and quality, colors that do not correspond in our visual range and that, probably, belong to infrared or ultraviolet.

The same is true of what we call inaudible sounds independent of the physical organs of hearing and whose hearing can however be easily provoked, and finally of a whole group of sensations that we will talk about again when we deal with Occultism: the sense of water, the sense of metals, the sense of health and disease in animated beings, etc., etc.

This extension is explained by the fact that sensation in its multifaceted aspects is not, as we believe, a material phenomenon, but a psychic phenomenon inherent not in our flesh body, but in our fluid body. We will have the opportunity to come back a little further.

Psychic phenomena, we said, are not subject to the same laws as

material phenomena. They have neither the same Space nor the same Time. Thus, for example, they totally escape gravity. On the other hand, bodies that are opaque and resistant in our world of matter cease to be opaque in the world of Prana and they are as easily crossed by other bodies as a glass by a ray of sunshine.

On the other hand, the translation of an object from one point to another, in the Pranic Space, is virtually instantaneous; it encounters no resistance, it does not cause any turmoil. Finally, with regard to Time, we can in the Pranic Time both be and have been, because this Time records as present all the events that, in terms of Matter, we consider past, just as it also records as present the events of the future.