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# YOGA-MĪMĀMSĀ

A Quarterly Journal devoted to Scientific and  
Philosophico-Literary Research in Yoga

## Understanding Ujjayi from books—Is it Adequate for Research, Training and Treatment ?

PART ONE - SANSKRIT TEXTS

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Vol. XXV, No. 3 & 4

1987

KAIVALYADHAMA,  
LONAVLA ( Maharashtra-India ) 410 403.

## Understanding Ujjayi from books-Is it Adequate for Research, Training & Treatment ?

### PART ONE – SANSKRIT TEXTS\*

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#### Abstract :

Existing Sanskrit literature on Ujjayi technique seems to be inadequate for a person having the background of modern education and not familiar with the yogic tradition. This literature can not be looked upon as 'self-help' or 'Do-it-yourself' guide books.

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\* The work was carried out with Grants-in-aid from the Ministries of Education, Government of India and Maharashtra State.

Submitted to the II World Congress on Yoga and Ayurveda, Benaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Jan., 1987.

\*\* Joint Director of Research and Principal Investigator of the experimental project on Ujjayi Pranayama. Responsible for the idea, plan of work and presentation.

\*\*\* Research Asstt. ( Psychology ), Scientific Research Deptt. Took interviews of the project participants and later on collected references in difference languages.

\*\*\*\* Research Officer, Philosophico Literary Research Department, went through Sanskrit literature on Yoga.

All the books dealing with the subject of Pranayama, even though belonging to Hatha-yoga school, do not mention Ujjayi.

Two different approaches with three techniques seem to be available for Ujjayi. One using the nostrils for sucking pavana and the other using nadis for this purpose having two technical details viz., working with the heart region and working with the Kundali.

It is felt that these techniques could be considered according to the individual capacities and development on yogic lines.

#### **Introduction :**

Ten participants and eight investigators involved in an experimental study on Ujjayi Pranayama were asked to follow its technique as given in a book of their choice in any of the Indian or European languages.

After three days, the participants as well as the investigators were requested to communicate their understanding about the technique of Ujjayi to the principal investigator individually and afterwards in a group meeting. During group work all the members realised highly diverse nature of instructions found in different books. This developed a curiosity to study the source books and manuscripts in Sanskrit and other languages after the project work was over. The important observations in respect of the technique of Ujjayi Pranayama as mentioned in Sanskrit books and manuscripts are briefly summarised in the present article.



**Materials and Methods :**

As Pranayama is one of the important aspect of many Yoga disciplines, seventy eight books and manuscripts on hatha yoga, tantra yoga, puranas, yoga upanishada and texts like Vasistha Samhita ( Yoga Kanda ), Brihad-yogi-yajnavalkya Smriti, Patanjala Yoga Sutras available in the Institute's library were scrutinised. The following books and manuscripts were found to deal with the technique of Ujjayi Pranayama.

1.	GhS	Gheranda Samhita,	V : 64-67	Book
2.	HP	Hatha pradipika	II : 51-53	„
3.	HPJ	Jyotsna commentry on Hathapradipika by Brahmananda	II : 51-53	„
4.	HR	Hatharatnavali	II : 14-16	„
5.	HSC	Hatha Sanketa Chandrika	IV : 45-47	MS
6.	SAU	Shandilyopanisad	I : 13-2 VII :	Book
7.	YB	Yoga Bija	XVI : 105-106	„
8.	YCh	Yoga Chintamani	III :	MS
9.	YK	Yoga Karnika of Nath Aghorananda	VII : 33-36	Book
10.	YKU	Yoga Kundalyupani- shad	I : 26-29	„
11.	YRP	Yoga Ratna Pradipika		MS
12.	YSU	Yoga Shikopanishad	I : 93-94	Book
13.	YSC	Yoga Siddhanta Chandrika Commentry on PYS	II : 51	„

Sanskrit verses dealing with the technique of Ujjayi are given in the appendix.

Attempts were made to understand the technique of Ujjayi as given in different books and manuscripts. Help from other colleagues was taken to get a clear idea of various statements made by different authors in this connection.

## Observations and Discussions :

### I. General :

1. Sanskrit literature, which serves as written source material, was found to be very concise for those who are educated in modern system of education having no background of Sanskrit literature and living yogic traditions.
2. Important Hatha texts like Goraksa Shataka, Shiva Samhita and Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati do not mention Ujjayi.
3. Thirteen out of twenty Yoga Upanishads deal with the subject of Pranayama but only three Upanishads viz , Yoga Kundlyupanishad ( YKU ), Yoga Shikopanishad ( YSU ) and Shandilyopani-shad (SAU) have mentioned Ujjayi.
4. Vasistha Samhita, Brihad-Yogi-Yajnavalkya smriti and Patanjala Yoga Sutras do not mention Ujjayi.
5. Nine out of twelve Puranas dealing with yoga mention pranayama, but not ujjayi.
6. Ten out of thirtytwo tantric texts mention Prana-yama but not Ujjayi. However these texts refer to Kundalini as is done by Hatha-yoga.

## II. Ujjayi Pranayama :

### A ) Name and Meaning :

1. All the text use the term "Kumbhaka" for pranayama and hence we get its name as 'Ujjayi Kumbhaka'
2. Yoga Karnika has used the term, 'Uhyayi' instead of Ujjayi.
3. No book has given the etymological meaning of the term Ujjayi.

### B ) The Technique :

Three distinct techniques were found and the references have been classified under the following heads in the appendix.

- I. According to Hatha Pradipika.
- II. According to Gheranda Samhita.
- III. According to Yoga Bija and SAU.

Instructions in relation to different phases of Ujjayi found in various texts have been summarised in the table.

( See Table on page No. 6 )

### Discussions :

1. Study of the table and the verses given in the appendix clearly points out that anyone not acquainted with the living yogic tradition will fail to grasp the technique of Ujjayi properly. Reading of any one book is not sufficient and referring more than one book could be confusing.
2. HP, HR, YCh, YKU and YSU wants the pavana to be attracted slowly through the nadis, YSU wants its practicants to lead it near the Kundali after attracting the same through the nadis.



## T A B L E

NATURE OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR UJJAYI AS FOUND IN DIFFERENT TEXTS  
A COMPARATIVE STATEMENT

SOURCE	INSTRUCTION	MEANING
<b>A. Condition of the mouth ( Given in HP tradition only ) :</b>		
1. HP, HSC, YCh, YKU, YSC	मुखं संयम्य mukham samyama	Close the mouth
2. HR	मुखं सन्नम्य mukham sannama	Bring down the mouth
3. YRP	मुखं (आ) सन्नदृगासाद्यम् mukham (ā) sannadṛgāsādyam (NB : All the three instructions could be integrated to-gether in practice )	Remain aware of the mouth.
<b>B. Puraka :</b>		
<b>I. According to HP Tradition :</b>		
1. Sucking the Pavana ( Vayu ) :-		
a) HP, HR, YCh, YKU, YSC,	नाडीभ्यामाकृष्य पवनं शनैः/पुनः nāḍibhyāmakṛṣya pavanam śanaiḥ/punaḥ	Slowly suck the pavana ( air ! ) through both the nadis

YSU, YB

नाडीभ्यां वायुमाकुष्य  
nādibhyām vayumākṛṣya

Suck or pull the vayu (air ! )  
through both the nadis  
( Ida & Pingla )

b) HSC

नासाभ्यामाकुष्य पवनं शनैः  
nāsābhyāmākṛṣya pavanam śanaish

Slowly suck the pavanaa  
( air ! ) through both the  
nostrils

SAU

नाभ्यां शनैः पवनमाकुष्य  
nāsābhyām śanaish pavanamakṛṣya

Slowly suck the pavana.

c) YRP

आकुष्य पवनं शनैः  
ākṛṣya pavanam śanaish

## 2. Extent and Nature of Suction :-

a) HP, YKU  
HSC, YCh

यथा लगति कण्ठात् हृदयावधिसस्वनम्  
yatha lagati kaṇṭhatsu  
hṛdyāvadhi sasvanam

(While) breathing from the  
heart ( chest ), produce sound  
and feel its (vayu) touch from  
the glottis to heart.

b) YRP

यथा लगति हृत्कंठं हृदयेवधि सस्वनम् पूरयेत्  
yatha lagati hṛtkaṇṭham  
hṛdyeavadhi sasvanam, pūryet

do

...internally feel the touch.....

—do—, हृदयावधि संस्थितः

—do—, hṛdyavadhi samsthitaḥ



T A B L E ( Contd.....2 )

SOURCE	INSTRUCTION	MEANING
c) YSC	अन्तर्लगति हृत्कण्ठाद् हृदयावधिसस्वनः antarlagati hṛtkanthād	..... internally feel the touch.....
SAU	हृद्र्यावधि सस्वानह hṛdryāvadhi sasvanah हृदयादि कंठपर्यन्त सस्वनं hṛdayādi kanthaparyantam sasvanam	Have breathing with sound, feel it from heart to glottis.
II) According to Gheranda Samhita and Yoga Karnika :		
GhS, YK 1	नासाभ्यां वायुमाकुष्य मुखमध्येच धारयेत् nāsābhyāṁ vāyumākṛṣya mukhamadyeca dhārayet	Suck the vayu through both the nostrils and hold it inside the mouth.
2	हृदगलाभ्यां समाकुष्य वायुं वक्त्रे च धारयेत् hṛdgalābhyāṁ samākṛṣya vāyum vaktre ca dhārayet	Evenly suck the vayu from heart to the glottis and hold it in the mouth.
3	मुखं प्रक्षाल्य संवन्ध कुर्याज्जालन्धरं ततः * mukhaṁ prakṣālya saṁvandva kuryājñalandharaṁ tataḥ	Apply Jalandhara after becoming aware of the region of the mouth.

\*प्रफुल्लं \*सरक्ष्य, संवेद्य, संबध्य  
 \*praphullam \*samrakṣya, samvedya,  
 sambandhya

### III. According to Yoga Bija and YSU.

YB, YSU

नाडीभ्यां वायुमाकृष्य

कुण्डल्या पार्श्वयोः क्षिपेत्/मुद्गीः  
 nādibhyām vayumākṛṣya  
 kuṇḍalya parśvayoḥ kṣipet /  
 sudhīḥ\*

( The intelligent sadhaka should ) direct ( lead ) the sucked  
 vayu through both the nadis  
 towards the Kundali.

### C. Kumbhaka :

HP, HR, YKU,  
 YCh, YSC, HSC\*

पूर्ववत् कुम्भयेत्प्राणं/प्राणान् \*  
 purvavat kumbhayet prāṇam/prāṇān\*

Perform Kumbhaka as before  
 i. e. feeling the vayu upto the  
 tips of the nails and hair

a) HP

आकेशादानखाग्राच्च निरोधावधि कुम्भयेत्  
 ākeśādānakhāgrācca  
 nirodhāvadhi kumbhayet

b) HR

यथेष्टं कुम्भयेद्वायुं  
 yatheṣṭham kumbhayedvāyūṁ

According to one's capacity  
 ( HR )

TABLE ( contd.....3 )

SOURCE	INSTRUCTION	MEANING
2. SAU	यथाशक्ति कुम्भयित्वा yathasakti kumbhayitvā	Have Kumbhaka according to (one's) capacity.
3. GhS, YK	आशक्ति कुम्भकं कृत्वा धारयेदविरोधतः āsakti kumbhakam krtvā dhārayedavirodhataḥ	Hold (the vayu) without any obstruction and perform Kumbhaka till the limit of your strength.
4. YB, YSU	धारयेद् उदरे dhārayed udare	Hold (it) in the abdomen.
D. Rechaka :		
1. HP, HR. HSC, YCh, YKU, YSC, YB, YSU	रेचयेदिड्या ततः/पुनः/सुधीः recayedidaya tataḥ/punah/sudhi.	Then/Again (perform) rechaka through Ida ( nadi ). The intelligent should do rechaka through Ida nadi.
2. SAU	इड्या विरेच्च Idaya virecca	Have rechaka through Ida ( nadi ).



3. YRP

कुम्भितं प्राण रेचयेदिड्या ततः  
kumbhitam prāṇam recayed  
idayā tataḥ

Then, the prana in the  
Kumbhaka stage be released  
through Ida.

E. Other Instructions :

HP, HR, YKU,  
YSC, HSC, YCh,  
YRP, SAU,  
YB, YSU.

गच्छता तिष्ठता कार्यम्  
उज्जाय्यारख्यं तु कुम्भकम्  
gacchata tiṣṭhata kāryam  
ujjāyakyam tu kumbhakam

Practice Ujjayi Kumbhaka  
while moving or sitting.

( 1 NB : All texts have used slightly different wordings, but the  
overall meaning conveyed by them is almost similar )

GhS, HSC and SAU, on the other hand, mention that vayu or Pavana should be sucked through the nasa i. e. nostrils and do not refer to nadis. However all the texts mention that rechaka should be done through Ida nadi. This statement could be taken to mean that even though the vayu is attracted through the nostrils (nasa), it should be directed into the nadis. Then only rechaka would be possible through Ida nadi.

3. While dealing with the subject of Pranayama, generally it is taken for granted by the literary scholars that 'nasa' means 'nadis' and 'nadis' mean 'Ida' and 'Pingla' i. e. left and right nostril respectively. The same trend is found in various translations of sanskrit texts dealing with the practical training in Yoga.
4. Brihadyogiyajnavalkyasmriti, one of the oldest texts on yoga (200 to 700 A. D ), has differentiated between nostrils and nadis and has advocated to fill all the nadis one by one after slowly sucking the external vayu through one nostril from all the sides ( Chapt. VIII : 19 ).

Vasista Samhita, another older text on Yoga (around 1150 AD) has advocated puraka-rechaka to be done through nadis. Second chapter of this text gives detailed information on nadis and their origin and courses along with other anatomico-physiological concepts from yoga. According to this text, Ida and Pingla arise from the 'Kanda' (which is supposed to be present in the pelvic region) and travel upto 'Nasanta'.

5. In heirarchy, HP is taken to be older ( 1360 to 1550 A. D ) than GhS ( 1700-1800 A. D ). HP refers to nadis while GhS is seen to refer to the use of nostrils in Ujjayi. Thus the nature of instructions seems to have undergone a change with the passage of time and to-day most of the books and yoga instructors are seen to think in terms of external air rather than internal prana nadis.

### Conclusions :

1. In conclusion it could be said that an average intelligent person with the background of modern system of education, but not familiar with the living tradition of yoga or sanskrit literature, fails to develop an adequate understanding about the technique of Ujjayi Pranayama by reading the books written in Sanskrit language alone. Therefore one feels the need of a teacher or a guide who is well versed in yogic traditions to develop proper insight into this subject.
2. It seems that the existing sanskrit literature on this subject can not be used as effective 'self-help' or 'Do-it-yourself' guide books as developed for other technical subjects of practical importance and significance in other languages.
3. Ujjayi pranayama is not found in all the books dealing with the subject of Pranayama. This could be taken to mean its restricted use in the field of Hatha yoga only.
4. Two different trends for practicing Ujjayi are seen. One making use of nostrils for Puraka-Rechaka



and other laying emphasis on nadis through which pavana or vayu is to be tackled inside the body, ultimately working with the Kundali. This first approach could be used by the beginners and the second one by the advanced students of yoga after developing an understanding about Nadis.

5. It is felt that various technical details about different phases could be integrated in the practice of Ujjayi according to the individual requirements and development.

#### **Acknowledgement :**

The authors gratefully acknowledge the help received from their colleagues in the Institute and the valuable guidance from Swami Digambarji, Director of Research for interpreting some of the verses.

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## परिशिष्ट

विधिनुसार वर्गीकरण किये हुए संस्कृत योग वाङ्मय में उज्जायी पर प्राप्त संदर्भ :-

## १. हठप्रदीपिकानुसारम्

१. अ. मुखं संयम्य नाडीभ्यामाकृष्य पवनं शनैः ।  
 ब. यथा लगति कण्ठात्तु हृदयावधि सस्वनम् ॥ ५१ ॥  
 स. पूर्ववत् कुम्भयेत् प्राणं रेचयेदिडयाततः ।  
 द. गच्छता तिष्ठता कार्यमुज्जाय्याख्यं तु कुम्भकम् ॥ ५३ ॥

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२. अ. मुखं सन्नम्य नाडीभ्यामाकृष्य पवनं शनैः ।  
 ब. यथा लगति हृत्कण्ठं हृदयावधि संस्थितः ॥ १४ ॥  
 स. उपरिनिदिष्ट । स.  
 द. गच्छन्तिष्ठन् प्रतीकार्यं उज्जायाख्या तु कुम्भकम् ॥ १६ ॥

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३. अ. उपरिनिदिष्ट । अ.  
 ब. उपरिनिदिष्ट । ब.  
 स. उपरिनिदिष्ट । स.  
 द. उपरिनिदिष्ट । द.

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४. अ. उपरिनिदिष्ट । अ.  
 ब. अन्तर्लगति हृत्कण्ठाद् हृदयावधि सस्वनः :  
 स. उपरिनिदिष्ट । स.  
 द. उपरिनिदिष्ट । द.

योगसिद्धान्त चन्द्रिका



## A P P E N D I X

References on Ujjayj as found in Sanskrit Literature Classified  
According to the nature of the Technique Described

## 1. According to Hathapradipika Tradition

1. A. mukham samyama nādibhyāmakṛṣya pavvanam  
sanaiḥ /  
B. yatha lagati kanthāttu hṛdayāvadhi sasvanam //51//  
C. purvavat kumbhayet prāṇam recayedidāyā tataḥ /  
D. gacchata tiṣṭhata karyamujjāyyākhyāntu kumbha-  
kam //53// HP, II/51-53.
2. A. mukham sannamya nādibhyāmakṛṣya pavanam  
sanaiḥ /  
B. yatha lagati hṛtkanṭham hṛdayāvadhi ramsthitah  
//14//  
C. Ibid. 1 C  
D. gacchantiṣṭhan pratikāryam ujjayyākhyā tu kumbha-  
kam //16// HR, II/14-16.
3. A. Ibid. 1A  
B. Ibid. 1B  
C. Ibid. 1C  
D. gacchatastisthatah..... Ibid. 1D  
YKU, I/26-29.
4. A. Ibid. 1A  
B. antarlagati hṛtkanṭhad hṛdayavadhi sasvanah/  
C. Ibid. 1C  
D. Ibid. 1D YSC

contd... .

५. अ. मुखं संयम्य नासाभ्यामाकृष्य पवनं शनैः ।  
 ब. उपरिनिर्दिष्ट । ब.  
 स. उपरिनिर्दिष्ट । स.  
 द. उपरिनिर्दिष्ट । द. हठसंकेतचंद्रिका, ४५-४७

६. अ. उपरिनिर्दिष्ट । अ.  
 ब. उपरिनिर्दिष्ट । ब.  
 स. उपरिनिर्दिष्ट । स.  
 द. उपरिनिर्दिष्ट । द.

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७. अ. मुखं (आ) सन्नदृगासाद्यमाकृष्य पवनं शनैः ।  
 ब. यदा लगति हृत्कण्ठ हृदयेऽवधि सस्वनम् ॥  
 स. पूरयेत कुंभितं प्राणं रेचयेदिडया ततः ।  
 द. गच्छता तिष्ठता कार्यमुच्चाख्यं कुंभकम् ॥

योगरत्नप्रदीपिका,

८. हृदयादिकण्ठपर्यन्तं सस्वनं नासाभ्यां शनैः  
 पवनमाकृष्य यथाशक्ति कुम्भयित्वा इडया  
 विरेच्य गच्छंस्तिष्ठन्कुर्यात् ॥ १३-१ ॥

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## १. घेरण्ड संहितानुसारम्

९. अ. नासाभ्यां वायुमाकृष्य मुखमध्ये च धारयेत् ।  
 ब. हृद्गलाभ्यां समाकृष्य वायुं वक्त्रेच धारयेत् ॥ ६४ ॥  
 स. मुखं प्रक्षाल्य संवन्ध्य कुर्याज्जालन्धरं ततः ।  
 द. आशक्ति कुम्भकं कृत्वा धारयेदविरोधतः ॥ ६५ ॥

घेरण्ड संहिता, ५/६४-६५

5. A. mukhaṁ samyama nasabhyamakṛsya pavanam  
sanaih /

B. Ibid. 1B

C. Ibid. 1C

D. Ibid. 1D

HSC, 45-47

6. A. Ibid. 1A

B. Ibid. 1B

C. Ibid. 1C

D. Ibid. 1D

YCh,

7. A. mukhaṁ (ā) sannadrgāsādyamākṛsya pavanam  
sanaih /

B. yada lagati hṛtkanṭha hrdayeavadhi sasvanam //

C. purayet kumbhitam pranam recayedidaya tataḥ //

D. gacchatā tisthatā kauryamuccayakhyam tu kumbha-  
kam //

YRP.

8. hṛdyadikaṇṭhparyantam sasvanam nasavayam sanaih/  
pavanamakṛsya yathasakti kumbhayitava idaya  
vireeya gacchnstistthankuryāt // 13-1 //

SAU, I/13-1

## II. According to Gheranda-Samhita & Yoga Karnika :

9. A. nāsābhyam vayumākṛṣya mukhamadhye ca dhāra-  
yet

B. hṛdgalabhyām samākṛṣya vayum vaktre ca dhāra-  
yet // 64 //

C. mukhaṁ prakṣālya samvandya kuryajjālandharam  
tataḥ /

D. āsakti kumbhakam kṛtvā dhārayedavirodhath //65//

GhS, V/64-65