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The *Sanatana* Concept of the Five *Pranas* and its Interrelation with Human Health and Well-being (*Svastha*)

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Abstract:

Prana is not the breath, though it is closely related to it at a physical level. *Prana*, broadly speaking, is our vital energy that operates body and mind and has not only physical but also mental and spiritual aspects, with the qualification that it is the broader life energy in the world of nature, and specifically our own life energy as individual creatures, extending to the reincarnating soul. Many people define *prana* as the breath or call it the breath. This can help us approach the vast subject of *prana* but can be misleading if we take it literally. In this article we will examine what *prana* is on different levels, its connection with the breath and its energy behind and beyond the breath, including various *pranayama* practices. *Pranayama* practices can help us connect to the *prana* not only outwardly but inwardly, including leading us to the higher *prana* of the breathless state.

Keywords: *Prana, Samana, Vyana, Apana, Udana, Pranayama*

INTRODUCTION

Life is immortal and eternal. The Earth, nature, and the entire universe is full of life, ever overflowing with life on different levels, dimensions and in innumerable forms and expressions. Though all embodied creatures must eventually die, as many more are continually being born. Death is a renewal of life, not the end of life, like our daily sleep that leads to a new day.

Life in Sanskrit is called *Prana*, which is not merely the breath as often translated, but the vitality, life-force and cosmic energy of life and consciousness as a whole. While *Prana* is common in Yogic thought and different forms of *Prana* may be introduced, the subject of *Prana* and its different subtypes is seldom examined in depth. In this detailed article we will

look into this vast subject, that we might be awakened to the great expanse of *Prana* in all of its manifestations.

Prana has many levels of meaning from the breath to the energy of consciousness itself. *Prana* is not only the basic life-force, it is the master form of all energy working on the level of mind, life and body. Indeed, the entire universe is a manifestation of *Prana*, which is the original creative power. Even Kundalini Shakti, the serpent power or inner power that transforms consciousness, develops from the awakened *Prana*.

The human being consists of five *koshas* or sheaths from the physical to subtle and causal principles:

- *Annamaya kosha* – food – physical – the five elements
- *Pranamaya kosha* – breath – vital – the five pranas, subtle body energies, motor organs
- *Manomaya kosha* – impressions – outer mind – sense organs, deeper imagination, astral
- *Vijnanamaya kosha* – ideas – intelligence – directed mental activity, deeper wisdom
- *Anandamaya kosha* – experiences – memory, subliminal and superconscious mind, repository of karmas, causal

PRANAMAYA KOSHA

The *Pranamaya Kosha* is the sphere of our vital life energies. This sheath mediates between the body on one side and the three sheaths of the mind (outer mind, intelligence and inner mind) on the other and has an action on both levels. It meditates between the five gross elements and the five sensory impressions.

The best English term for the *Pranamaya kosha* is probably the “vital sheath” or “vital body,” to use a term from Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga. *Pranamaya kosha* consists of our vital urges of survival, reproduction, movement and self-expression, being mainly connected to the five motor organs (excretory, urino-genital, feet, hands, and vocal organ).

Most of us are dominated by the vital body and its deep-seated urges that are necessary for us to remain alive. It is the home of the vital or subconscious ego which holds the various fears, desires and attachments which afflict us. We most of us spend our time in life seeking enjoyment through the vital in the form of sensory enjoyment and acquisition of material objects.

A person with a strong vital nature becomes prominent in life and is able to impress their personality upon the world. Those with a weak vital lack the power to accomplish much of anything and have little effect upon life, usually remaining in a subordinate position. Generally, people with strong and egoistic vitals run the world, while those with weak vitals follow them. Such a strong egoistic vital is one of the greatest obstacles to the spiritual path.

A strong vital or *Pranamaya kosha*, however, is important for the spiritual path as well, but this is very different than the egoistic or desire oriented vital. It derives its strength not from our personal power but from surrender to the Divine and its great energy. Without a strong spiritual vital we lack the power to do our practices and not fall under worldly influences.

Yet *Prana* in various forms exists in all five *koshas* and is ultimately rooted in the *Atman* or inner Self beyond them. This *Atmic Prana* is the highest *prana* and grants healing and immortality of consciousness.

THE FIVE PRANAS

Pranamaya kosha is composed of the five *Pranas*. The one primary *Prana* divides into five types according to its movement and direction. This is an important subject in Ayurvedic medicine as well as Yogic thought.

Prana

Prana, literally the “forward moving air,” moves inward and governs reception of all types from the eating of food, drinking of water, and inhalation of air, to the reception of sensory impressions and mental experiences. It is propulsive in nature, setting things in motion and guiding them. It provides the basic energy that drives us in life. Ultimately it connects to the *Purusha* or the higher Self within.

Apana

Apana, literally the “air that moves away,” moves downward and outward and governs all forms of elimination and reproduction (which also has a downward movement). It governs the elimination of the stool and the urine, the expelling of semen, menstrual fluid and the fetus, and the elimination of carbon dioxide through the breath. On a deeper level it rules the elimination of negative sensory, emotional and mental experiences. It is the basis of our immune function on all levels.

Udana

Udana, literally the “upward moving air,” moves upward and qualitative or transformative movements of the life-energy. It governs growth of the body, the ability to stand, speech, effort, enthusiasm and will. It is our main positive energy in life through which we can develop our subtle and causal bodies and evolve in consciousness.

Samana

Samana, literally the “balancing air,” moves from the periphery to the center, through a churning and discerning action. It aids in digestion on all levels. It works in the gastrointestinal tract to digest food, in the lungs to digest air or absorb oxygen, and in the mind to homogenize and digest experiences, whether sensory, emotional or mental.

At a higher yogic level, it provides the balance to take us into *Samadhi*, the yogic state of unity consciousness.

Vyana

Vyana, literally the “outward moving air,” moves from the center to the periphery. It governs circulation on all levels. It moves the food, water and oxygen throughout the body, and keeps our emotions and thoughts circulating in the mind, imparting movement and providing strength. In doing so it assists all the other *Pranas* in their work. On a higher level it allows our energies to expand into the infinite.

The five *Pranas* are energies and processes that occur on several levels in the body and mind. However, we can localize them in a few key ways particularly relative to the physical body.

- *Prana Vayu* governs the movement of energy from the head down to the navel, which is the Pranic center in the physical body.
- *Apana Vayu* governs the movement of energy from the navel down to the root chakra.
- *Samana Vayu* governs the movement of energy from the entire body back to the navel.
- *Vyana Vayu* governs the movement of energy out from the navel throughout the entire body.
- *Udana* governs the movement of energy from the navel up to the head.

As a simple summary we could say that *Prana* governs the intake of substances. *Samana* governs their absorption. *Vyana* governs the circulation of nutrients. *Udana* governs the release of positive energy. *Apana* governs the elimination of waste-materials.

This is much like the working of a machine. *Prana* brings in the fuel, *Samana* converts this fuel to energy, *Vyana* circulates the energy to the various work sites. *Apana* releases the waste materials or by products of the conversion process. *Udana* governs the positive energy created in the process and determines the work that the machine is able to do.

The key to health and well-being is to keep our *Pranas* in harmony. When one *Prana* becomes imbalanced, the others tend to become imbalanced as well because they are all linked together. Generally, *Prana* and *Udana* work opposite to *Apana* as the forces of energization versus those of elimination. Similarly, *Vyana* and *Samana* are opposites as expansion and contraction.

HOW PRANA CREATES THE PHYSICAL BODY

Without *Prana* the physical body is no more than a lump of clay. *Prana* sculpts this gelatinous mass into various limbs and organs. It does this by creating various channels or *Nadis*, through which it can operate and energize gross matter into various tissues and organs.

Prana Vayu creates the openings and channels in the head and brain down to the heart. There are seven openings in the head, the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and mouth. *Udana* assists *Prana* in creating the openings in the upper part of the body, particularly those of the mouth and vocal organs. The mouth, after all, is the main opening in the head and in the entire body. It could be said that the entire physical body is an extension of the mouth, which is the main organ of physical activity, eating and self-expression.

Apana Vayu creates the openings in the lower part of the body, those of the urino-genital and excretory systems. *Samana Vayu* creates the openings in the middle part of the body, those of the digestive system, centered in the navel. It opens out the channels of the intestines and the organs, like the liver and pancreas, which secrete into it. *Vyana Vayu* creates the channels going to the peripheral parts of the body, the arms and legs. It creates the veins and arteries and also the muscles, sinews, joints and bones.

In summary, *Samana Vayu* creates the trunk of the body (which is dominated by the gastrointestinal tract), while *Vyana Vayu* creates the limbs. *Prana* and *Udana* create the upper openings or bodily orifices, while *Apana* creates those below.

Prana however exists not just on a physical level. The navel is the main vital center for the physical body. The heart is the main center for the *Pranamaya Kosha*. The head is the main center for *Manomaya kosha*.

PRANA AND THE MIND

The mind also has its energy and *Prana*. This derives from food, breath and impressions externally. The Five *Pranas* work upon the mind in ways a little different than they do on the physical body as their action is at a subtle level.

- *Prana* governs the intake of sensory impressions.
- *Samana* governs mental digestion.
- *Vyana* governs mental circulation.
- *Apana* governs the elimination of toxic ideas and negative emotions.
- *Udana* governs positive mental energy, strength and enthusiasm.

On a psychological level, *Prana* governs our receptivity to positive sources of nourishment, feeling and knowledge through the mind and senses. When deranged it causes wrong desire and insatiable craving. We become misguided, misdirected and generally out of balance.

Apana on a psychological level governs our ability to eliminate negative thoughts and emotions. When deranged it causes depression and we get clogged up with undigested experience that weighs us down in life, making us fearful, suppressed and weak.

Samana Vayu gives us nourishment, contentment and balance in the mind. When deranged we cling to things and become possessive in our behaviour.

Vyana Vayu gives us free movement and independence in the mind. When deranged it causes isolation, hatred, and alienation. We are unable to unite with others or remain connected in what we do.

Udana gives us joy and enthusiasm and helps awaken our higher spiritual and creative potentials. When deranged it causes pride and arrogance. We become ungrounded, trying to go to high and lose track of our roots.

HIGHER YOGIC ASPECTS OF THE FIVE PRANAS

The *Pranas* have many special actions in Yogic practices. On a spiritual level, *Samana Vayu* governs the space within the heart (*antar hridayakasha*) in which the true Self, the *Atman* dwells as a fire with seven flames, governs the central internal space or *antariksha*. *Samana* regulates *Agni* with fuel, which must burn evenly. Without the peace and balance of *Samana* we cannot return to the core of our being or concentrate the mind.

Vyana governs the movement of *Prana* through the *Nadis*, keeping them open, clear, clean and even in their functioning. *Apana* protects us from negative astral influences and false teachers. *Prana* itself gives us the proper aspiration for our spiritual development.

Udana governs our growth in consciousness and takes the mind into the state of sleep and into the after-death realms. *Udana* also governs the movement up the *sushumna*, including the awakening of the *Kundalini*. The mind moves with *Udana Vayu*. This takes us to the states of dream and deep sleep. After death it leads the soul to the astral and causal planes. *Udana* is often the most important Prana for spiritual growth. It also governs *mantra*.

As we practice Yoga the subtle aspects of these *Pranas* begin to awaken. This may cause various unusual movements of energy in body and mind, including the occurrence of various spontaneous movements or *kriyas*. We may feel new expanses of energy (subtle *Vyana*), great peace (subtle *Samana*), a sense of lightness or levitation (subtle *Udana*), deep groundedness and stability (subtle *Apana*), or just heightened vitality and sensitivity (subtle *Prana*).

PRANA, THE BREATH AND SENSES

First let us examine the role of the breath relative to *prana*. The breath serves to keep the *prana* or life force in the body and feeds it. Breathing is the main function of the *prana* to sustain our physical life. *Prana* derives from various external sources starting with the air taken by the

lungs. This action of breathing is the main and most immediate life function we have. If a person fails to breathe, life cannot be sustained for very long afterwards.

We also take in pranic life energy from our sensory openings or orifices in the head. These include the 2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 nostrils and mouth, called the seven *pranas* in Vedic teachings. Air is taken in by the nostrils, sensations of light through the eyes and of sound by the ears, food and beverages and air through the mouth.

The mind is connected to the senses and brings in the life energy of words, emotions and thoughts, and through human contact at a mental level. The breath also energizes the senses and mind and promotes digestion. We also take in life energy from the skin and the sense of touch that covers the entire body. The breath is only one part of this, though central in its function.

PRANA AND AGNI

The human body is built around the digestive fire or *Jatharagni* in the navel region that extracts the *prana* from food and beverages. This is a kind of material fire digesting the earth and water elements. There is a second gaseous or pranic fire in the lungs and heart region that digests the *prana* from the air that we breath. This is called *Pranagni* or the *Agni* of *Prana*.

That *prana* so nourished by external pranic inputs runs all of our vital activities including through the other four *pranas*, *Udana* and *Apana*, upward and downward moving forces of vital energy, *Samana* and *Vyana*, contraction and expansion movement of vital energy.

Yet these outer physical pranic sources sustain a deeper inner *prana* or life energy, whose ultimate origin is not physical, but our own *Atman* or inner Self, the immortal Divine consciousness at the core of our being. We have an inner spiritual pranic core which bodily processes of breathing, eating, sensing and thinking support at a physical level.

This inner pranic core or flame, like a pilot light in a gas stove, endures during deep sleep and goes on to another body after death. It supports all vital activities of body, senses and mind. This inner *Prana* is beyond the breath, though held in the body by the breath.

WORKING ON PRANA - PRANAYAMA

Proper nutrition brings about the increase of *Prana* on a physical level. This also requires proper elimination. In Ayurvedic thought the *Prana* from the food is absorbed in the large intestine, particularly in the upper two-thirds of this organ, which is not simply an organ of elimination. For this reason, *Apana Vayu* is the most important *Prana* for physical health and treating *Vata dosha*.

The main method for working on *Prana* is *Pranayama* or mainly Yogic breathing exercises. Yoga emphasizes purification of the body (*deha suddhi*) and purification of the mind (*chitta suddhi*) as the means to Self-realization. For this reason, Yoga emphasizes a vegetarian diet rich in *Prana* or foods full of the life-force and a mind rooted in ethical values like truthfulness and non-violence. An impure, toxic or disturbed body and mind cannot realize the higher Self. However, the key to purifying body and mind is *prana*. For this purpose, the main method is purification of the *nadis* or channels through which *Prana* flows (*Nadi-shodhana*).

While all *Pranayama* aids in this regard, most important is alternate nostril breathing, which aids in the balance of the right and left *Prana* currents. According to the Yogic system the body and all of its channels follow a right or left predominance. The right side of the body is masculine or solar in nature. The left side is feminine or lunar in nature. The left or the lunar *nadi*, is *Kapha* or water predominant, and increases energy on the left side of the body. It aids in such activities as rest, sleep, relaxation. The right or solar *nadi* is *Pitta* or fire predominant and increases energy on the right side. It aids in such activities as digestion, work, and concentration.

Regular alternate nostril breathing is the most important method for keeping our *Pranas* or energies in balance. It helps create the unitary *prana* necessary to sustain unitary awareness.

Another method is uniting *Prana* and *Apana*. *Apana*, which is aligned with the force of gravity, usually moves downward resulting not only in disease and death but in the downward movement of consciousness. *Prana*, on the other hand, tends to disperse upward through the mind and senses, as it is our opening to the energies above.

Yogic practices require bringing *Apana* up. *Prana* must be brought down to unite with *Apana*. This helps unite and balance all the *Pranas*. In doing so the inner fire or Kundalini gets enkindled in the region of the navel. *Mula Bandha* is an important practice in this regard. The goal is to balance our outer and physical *pranas* and awaken higher and inner *pranas* of deeper awareness.

MANTRA AND MEDITATION

The *Pranas* or energies in the mind can be dealt with directly as well. Color and sound (music) are important ways to direct energy in the mind. The best technique is *mantra*, particularly single syllable or bija *mantras* like OM, which create vibrations (*nada*) that can help direct energy into the subconscious.

Meditation, creating space in the mind, serves to create more *Prana* in the mind. When the mind is brought to a silent and receptive condition, like the expanse of the sky, a new energy comes into being within it that brings about great transformations.

Indeed, all the paths of Yoga are based upon *Prana*. *Bhakti Yoga* or the Yoga of Devotion brings about Pranic transformation by uniting us with the Divine Will and Divine *Prana*. All *Karma Yoga* or service is based upon alignment with the Divine Will as well. This also gives us more *Prana*, not only to act outwardly but for inner development.

Classical Yoga or *Raja Yoga* is based upon the control of mental activities (*Chitta-vrittis*). The vibration of the mind (*Chitta-spanda*) follows the vibration of *Prana* (*Prana-spanda*). Therefore, *Pranayama* helps control the mind. It also helps control the senses (*Pratyahara*) because it withdraws our awareness inward from the senses. *Hatha Yoga* itself is mainly concerned with *Prana* and even *Asana* occurs as an expression of *Prana*. Many great Yogis did not learn *Asana* through mechanical practice but were taught *Asana* by the power of their awakened *Prana*.

Even *Jnana Yoga* or the Yoga of Knowledge depends upon a strong will and concentration. Without a well-developed *Udana Vayu* it cannot succeed. In the Yoga of Knowledge, the *Prana* of inquiry must be created, which is to inquire into our true nature not merely mentally but in all of our daily activities. This requires that inquiry occurs through *Prana* and not simply through the outer mind.

Indeed, as the Vedas say, we are all under the control of *Prana*. *Prana* is said to be the Sun that imparts life and light to all and dwells within the heart as the Self of all creatures.

THE POWER OF PRANA IN YOGA AND AYURVEDA

Yoga and Ayurveda constitute a way of life that allows us to arrive at longevity and immunity, and to provide the basis for the pursuit of Self-realization and *Moksha*. Their approach to healing is based upon right values, right behaviour, and right relationship with our natural environment and humanity overall.

The medical side of Ayurveda is important for the treatment of disease. The wellness side of Ayurveda Healing remains relevant to all and interfaces with the practices of Yoga, which aid in wellness of body and mind. Yoga therapy (*Yoga chikitsa*) is an integral part of this Ayurvedic wellness approach for body and mind.

The link between Ayurveda and Yoga in terms of wellness (*svastha*) is *Prana*.

In Ayurvedic Healing, *Prana* is the motivating life force behind the three *doshas* or biological humors of *Vata* (air), *Pitta* (fire) and *Kapha* (water), which are the prime factors both determining individual constitution and understanding the disease process. As a power of air and energy, *Prana* is most connected to *Vata dosha* or *Vayu*. *Vata dosha* is the main *dosha*

behind the disease process as it is most connected to subtle imbalances and disturbances of *Prana*.

TYPES AND LEVELS OF PRANA

Yoga and Ayurveda recognize five forms of *Vayu*: *Prana* as its basic propulsive force; *Udana* as its ascending and motivating energy; *Vyana* as its expanding and circulating energy; *Samana* as its contracting, centering and balancing force; and *Apana* as its downward and outward movement. These five *Vayus* are the subtypes of *Vata dosha* in Ayurveda crucial in both the diagnosis and treatment of disease.

Prana is also the link between the body and the mind. The body, food sheath or *annamaya kosha*, is kept alive and moving by the flow of *Prana* through it, facilitated by the processes of breathing, eating and drinking, which sustain the *Prana* in the body, and forms the basis of the functioning of our internal organs.

Between body and mind is the sheath of *Prana* or *pranamaya kosha*, closely connected to the breath, the motor organs and sense organs. It is the electrical force that runs both body and mind.

The mind or mental sheath (*manomaya kosha*) is sustained from a physical level by food, water and breath. It extends to subtler mental energies, with the mind having its own five pranic movements as expansion and contraction, ascending or descending energy, and over all propulsive force. These connect to the yet more subtle koshas of intelligence (*vijnana*) and bliss (*Ananda*).

WORKING WITH PRANA AND THE BREATH

Mind and *Prana* are said to be like the two wings of a bird as the powers of knowledge and action. Our thoughts are reflected in our breathing and circulatory processes. Our breath is affected by our emotions and mental state, which can weaken and disturb it.

Through the power of *Prana* and its five subtypes or movements, we can regulate body and mind and sustain their right functioning and positive development. We can learn to make our awareness expand or contract, ascend or descend at will moving through the greater universe of consciousness.

Yet *Prana* is not simply the breath. The breath is the main factor that sustains *Prana* in the body, but *Prana* as life-energy never dies. It is part of the subtle body (*sukshma sharira*), which after death transmigrates into another body for a new incarnation.

The breath is our main means of working with *Prana* in our physical lives and the basis of most forms of *Pranayama*. Yet *Pranayama's* aim is to calm the breath so that we can connect to deeper Pranic energies of mind and consciousness beyond the body. The yogic goal is to remove the knot of attachment of the mind with the body, which constitutes the ego and all of its illusions, leading us to sorrow.

The main factor of wellness in Yoga and Ayurveda is to deepen the breath and unify the pranic forces within us. There is a higher unitary *prana* behind the breath and the senses, just as there is a higher unitary consciousness behind the mind. Unitary *prana* and unitary mind go together and are mutually transformative.

PRACTICING PRANAYAMA

Various *Pranayama* practices have been developed to strengthen and balance the *Prana* through working with the breathing process. These ultimately aim at the breathless state (*kevala kumbhaka*) which is often misunderstood. It is not simply holding the breath, but accessing the deeper Prana behind the breath.

Yogic *pranayama* works to balance the *pranas* within us. This begins with alternate nostril breathing to balance the *Ida* and *Pingala Nadi* pranic flows through the left and right nostrils, which have lunar and solar energies. It extends to balancing *Udana* and *Apana* as ascending and descending *pranas*, and *Samana* and *Vyana* as contracting and expanding energy flows (like the circulation of the blood or contraction and expansion of the muscles).

Balancing and concentration of *Prana* connects us back to our inner *Prana* at the level of consciousness. This unitary *Prana* allows the *Kundalini Shakti* to awaken and ascend through the *Sushumna*. As long as our *Prana* is divided, scattered and caught in dualistic currents, there can be no real awakening of *Kundalini* or opening of the *chakras*. Unitary *Prana* is the basis of the *Yoga Shakti* overall.

This unitary *Prana* in turn is connected to unitary mind and Awareness. Both go together. Only if our vital energy and will power is unified and focused can we access a higher awareness. Yet only if our mind and consciousness is unified and focused can we access the higher *Prana* beyond the breath.

The breathless or *samadhi* state (*kevala kumbhaka*) is not just a state of the breath. It is a state of unitary *Prana* and mind. In this unified state our deeper Self-awareness is able to witness both the breath and our thoughts from a standpoint of detachment, no longer identified with them. This removes our pranic attachment to body and mind, and all external sources of *prana*, and reconnects our *Prana* with the Self within. Then whether the outer breath continues we remain inwardly in state of awareness no longer defined by the breath or by the processes of birth and death.

Alternate nostril breathing (*Nadi Shodhana*) is the key practice to develop a unitary *Prana*, balancing the flow of the breath between the right and left nostrils, solar and lunar *nadis*, taking the *Prana* from duality to unity. This allows the *Prana* to enter into the central channel or *Sushumna*, as the unified *prana* that connects us to the *Ananda* or bliss within, which holds the deeper healing energies of *amrit* and *Soma*.

AYURVEDA AND PRANAYAMA

Ayurveda has special herbs and oils that aid in developing a deeper *Prana*. This is part of its rejuvenation or *rasayana* therapy, which usually requires a preliminary *Pancha Karma* purification therapy first. *Brahmi rasayana* is very important in this regard. We should all learn to access the power of *Pranayama* for healing the body and purifying the mind, along with its Ayurvedic support practices, and above all recognize the deeper and deathless *Prana* behind and beyond any breathing practices. This is one of the great secrets of Yoga. Becoming one with *Prana*, we go beyond birth and death.

The highest *Prana* is the power of the *Atman* or inner Self of pure consciousness. This is the *Prana Purusha* of the Upanishads and *Shiva Mahadeva* as the ruler of *Prana*. In addition, there are various connections of *Prana* with deep sleep, *yoga nidra* and *samadhi*, that are worthy of profound study and practice. We not only live through *Prana*, we can connect to the forces of immortality through it.

FROM HUMAN LIFE TO THE UNIVERSAL LIFE

As mortal human beings, we have an embodied consciousness or mind, but also an embodied life energy or personal *prana*. Our minds, senses, breath, vitality and organic rhythms are ever moving and changing. Yet behind our individualized mind, life and body, is a universal consciousness, *prana*, energy and expression.

True healing and rejuvenation of body and mind requires embracing this universal *Prana*, which is beyond birth and death. This process of integration with the universe begins with embracing the world of nature around us from the Earth to the sky. You are not simply chemical patterns that occur in the body or brain that can be adjusted merely at a chemical level. You are not just a physical structure or mental memory system. You are an expression of the universal life and consciousness, connected to the totality of all existence. Your current embodiment is just a particle and moment of your unending being.

Please take adequate time and attention every day to join in your true place in the universal life *dharma* for the benefit of all, to allow the universal *Prana* to flow through you into all that you experience, uniting with the life around you. If our awareness of life is limited to the physical

body and personal self, we are just touching the surface of our real cosmic identity. We are not alive in our real universal potential.

If we understand the life as consciousness in manifestation, then we can find our true Self, the *Vedic Prana Purusha*, in all beings and in all existence and at every moment taking us beyond all death and sorrow. Life never dies but can take on innumerable forms or rest in pure formless Being beyond all time.

Brief Profile of the Author:

Dr. David Frawley (Pandit Vamadeva Shastri) is a Vedacharya and one of the leading exponents of Vedic knowledge in an interdisciplinary approach worldwide. The American Institute of Vedic Studies serves as a vehicle for his work, offering on-line access to go along with his many published writings. His work is highly esteemed by numerous students and followers as well as by many organizations worldwide – he was awarded India’s prestigious Padma Bhushan award for his distinguished service to the nation.

Dr. David Frawley has a D. Litt. (Doctor of Letters), the highest educational title possible in the field of Yoga and Vedic sciences, from SVYASA (Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana), the deemed Yoga university recognized by the Government of India. Vamadeva received a Pandit award as part of a special Brahmacharya Vishvanathji yearly award in Mumbai in 1994. His role as a pandit and Vedic teacher (Vedacharya) has been honored by many groups in India. These include Swaminarayan (BAPS), Arsha Vidya Gurukulam (Swami Dayananda), and the Chinmaya Mission (Swami Mitrananda). Such a traditional title as a Pandit and Vedacharya implies having written and taught on the four Vedas and Upanishads, which Vamadeva has done in his many Vedic books that include original translations from the Sanskrit, starting with the most ancient Rigveda. Most of his books can be found in India through Motilal Banarsidass (MLBD).

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This paper draws content extensively from my following writeups:

1. Secrets of the Five Pranas

<https://www.vedanet.com/the-secrets-of-the-five-pranas/>

2. The Power of Prana in Yoga and Ayurveda
<https://www.vedanet.com/the-power-of-prana-in-yoga-and-ayurveda/>
3. The Universal Life-Energy, Vishvaprana
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4. Prana Beyond the Breath and Life Beyond Death
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