

# ANTARMUKHAM

*Inner Consciousness — The Inward Turn*

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## What Is Antarmukham?

Antarmukham — the inward turn — means this: to turn back toward the very source from which our mind and Knowledge arise. Bahirmukham — the outward turn — means this: for the mind and Knowledge to leave their source and travel outward, to unite with the external world through the senses.

We live these two states every single day. In deep sleep, we are naturally Antarmukha — turned inward. In the waking state, we are naturally Bahirmukha — turned outward. Yet very few of us pause to notice what actually changes between these two states — in our breath, and in our Knowledge.

This is what we must understand: Is the act of breathing simply a physical exchange with external air? Or do physical, chemical, and Knowledge-related changes occur within us through the breath? If we reflect carefully, we will find that everything begins to make sense.

## The Physical Truth and the Hidden Truth

We know one biological truth about breathing — that oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>) from the atmosphere enters the alveoli (air sacs) of the lungs, where fine capillary blood vessels absorb the oxygen and release carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) as a waste gas. This is how blood purification occurs. That is the well-known, universally accepted truth.

But within that same process, a deeper, less-known truth is concealed. And that truth is our Jnanam — the Knowledge within us.

Our Jnanam flows from the brain, through the Sushumna Nadi (the spinal cord and its subtle channel), and enters the other Nadis (subtle energy channels) of the body. With each exhalation, this Jnana Shakti (Knowledge-force) moves outward. And with each inhalation, it travels back upward, attempting to return to its origin — the brain. This Jnana Shakti is what we call Prana — the life force within us. The measure of Prana within us determines the measure of Jnanam we carry.

*The Prana within us is not the oxygen outside. The Prana within us is our Jnana Shakti — our Knowledge-force. Oxygen merely assists its circulation. They are not the same.*

## Prana Is Not Oxygen

In every living being, the exhalation is more prolonged than the inhalation. Humanity has always known this to be natural — yet no one has stopped to examine it closely. We assume it is

simply how life works. We use our Jnanam for other activities and go about our daily existence. But here is what we must carefully distinguish:

The Prana within us is entirely separate from the Prana Vayu (oxygen) in the external atmosphere. Our inner Prana is inseparably united with our Jnanam — with our awareness itself. It is by virtue of this inner Prana that we are alive.

Oxygen — the external gas — is an inorganic, chemical substance. It can be stored in a cylinder and transported for use wherever needed. It functions like a catalyst — it assists and supports the circulation of blood within us. It facilitates the movement of our inner Prana. But it is only a supporter, not the Prana itself.

As long as the inner Prana is at least at its minimum required level, external oxygen can sustain our circulation to some degree. But if the inner Prana falls below that minimum threshold — no matter how much oxygen is administered, no matter how much blood is provided, no matter how long a patient is kept on a ventilator with artificial breathing — it will be of no lasting use.

*Our most important duty, therefore, is to increase the measure of Prana within us. The method for doing this is Pranayama.*

## What Is Pranayama?

Pranayama = Prana + Ayama. Ayama means to extend, to lengthen, to stretch. Therefore, Pranayama means the lengthening or extension of the Prana — specifically, the extension of the upward-moving Prana that rises with the exhalation (Ucchhvasa).

This has nothing to do with external air. However, as long as the Prana is being extended upward — from the Heart centre toward the Atma-sthana (the seat of the Self at the Bhrumadhya, the midpoint between the eyebrows) — there remains a connection with external air. As the Prana rises further toward the Atma, its connection with outer air progressively decreases. When the Prana fully merges with the Atman, the outward breath ceases entirely. This state is called Samadhi — the Prana withdrawing from the Ida and Pingala Nadis, travelling through the Sushumna Nadi, and merging into the Atman. This is the Triveni Sangama — the sacred confluence of the three streams.

## How Is Pranayama Practised?

No matter how extensively this is described in words, unless one receives instruction directly face-to-face from a Guru (Gurumukhata Upadesa), it remains extremely difficult to understand in its fullness. However, the following explanation is necessary for those who have been practising Pranayama with increasing involvement with external air — closing the nostrils with the fingers while practising — so they understand the difference between outer-breath techniques and true Pranayama. If this is not clarified, there is a real danger of wasting precious time in what is merely a physical nasal exercise, mistakenly called Pranayama.

True Pranayama is practised as follows: Without using the fingers to hold the nostrils, holding the breath upward in the Ucchhvasa (exhalation), lengthening it, and creating Gharshana (friction/force) — moving upward and downward inside the Sushumna channel — the inner heat rises. When this rising inner heat reaches the Bhrumadhya (the midpoint between the

eyebrows), a divine light (Divya Prakasham), Knowledge, and bliss become clearly perceptible within.

When this occurs, the breath moving inward has become Antarmukha (inward-facing) and Urdhvamukha (upward-facing). Those who correctly practise Pranayama unify their vision, Prana, and mind — and with eyes turned upward, centre their awareness at the Bhrumadhya. This means: to guide the Prana into the Brahmarandhra (the crown chakra) through the Sushumna, the eyes must be fully opened with the whites fully showing — not the dark pupils — and this upward yogic force is applied through the Sushumna channel.

At that moment, the body, neck, and head must be in one straight line. But today, in the world, many seekers — whether in Dhyana (meditation) or Yoga — tilt and bow their necks, dip their heads, and sink into a kind of drowsy inner darkness. This may produce inwardness, but not the upward-facing awareness. Understand that in such a state, their Prana is not travelling toward the Bhrumadhya.

## The Bhagavad Gita's Instruction on Posture

*Samam kayashiro-greevam dharayann achalam sthirah,  
Samprekshya nasikaagram svam, dishash chana-valokayan.  
(Bhagavad Gita 6:13)*

*"Holding the body, neck, and head in a steady, straight line — motionless and stable — fixing the gaze at the tip of the nose (Nasikaagram), without looking in other directions, practise Pranayama."*

From this verse, it is clear that the correct practice involves keeping the body, neck, and head aligned in a single straight line, and fixing the gaze at Nasikaagram. The word Nasikaagram means 'the beginning of the nose' — which is the Bhrumadhya (the midpoint between the eyebrows), not the physical tip of the nose. Practitioners who close their eyes in other postures, or who practise with the physical nose-tip as the focal point, cannot achieve the full result no matter what method they follow.

True Antarmukham and Urdhvamukham — inward and upward consciousness — are simultaneously complete only when this correct alignment and upward gaze are maintained. Until then, the practice only increases Tamo Guna (the quality of dullness and inertia), and cannot produce Jnanam or Moksha.

## Sleep — Natural Antarmukham Without Urdhvamukham

Even in deep sleep, we are Antarmukha — turned inward. Yet because we are also Adhomukha (downward-facing) in sleep, we are not united with Jnanam during that state. This is why the sleeping state — despite its inwardness — does not grant the experience of true Knowledge.

Therefore, those who seek Jnanam must practise so as to produce both Antarmukham and Urdhvamukham simultaneously — the inward turn and the upward turn together — as described above.

All other practices — however sincere — develop only Tamo Guna (the quality of darkness and inertia). They do not produce Jnanam, they do not produce Moksha.

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# CHAPTER SUMMARY

## *Antarmukham – Key Teachings*

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- Antarmukham means turning the mind and Jnanam back toward their own source. Bahirmukham means allowing them to flow outward into the world through the senses.
- We already experience Antarmukham naturally in deep sleep, and Bahirmukham naturally in waking. But in sleep, the mind is downward-facing (Adhomukha) – which is why sleep brings rest but not Jnanam.
- The physical breath involves oxygen exchange, blood purification, and CO<sub>2</sub> release. But hidden within this physical process is a deeper truth: the movement of Jnana Shakti (Knowledge-force) through the Nadis.
- The inner Prana is completely different from external oxygen. Prana is the Jnana Shakti itself – the force of awareness and intelligence. Oxygen is merely an inorganic catalyst that supports blood circulation and assists the movement of inner Prana.
- No amount of external oxygen can substitute for or revive depleted inner Prana. The ventilator keeps the body functioning, but if inner Prana is exhausted, life cannot be sustained.
- Our primary duty in human life is to increase our inner Prana. The only method for this is Pranayama – the extension (Ayama) of the upward-moving Prana (Ucchhvasa Prana).
- True Pranayama does not involve closing the nostrils with the fingers or forceful breathing exercises with external air. It is the internal extension of the Prana upward through the Sushumna channel toward the Atma-sthana (Bhrumadhya – the seat between the eyebrows).
- When the Prana merges into the Atman, external breath ceases completely. This is Samadhi – the Prana withdrawing from Ida and Pingala Nadis and dissolving into the Sushumna at the Triveni Sangama (sacred confluence of the three channels).
- The Bhagavad Gita (6:13) prescribes keeping the body, neck, and head in a straight, unwavering line – and fixing the gaze at 'Nasikaagram' (the Bhrumadhya / beginning of the nose – the third eye centre), not looking elsewhere.
- Most meditators today tilt their heads, bow their necks, and sink into inner darkness (Tamas). This creates some inwardness but not upward-facing awareness. The Prana does not reach the Bhrumadhya in this posture.
- True Antarmukham requires both Antarmukha (inward) AND Urdhvamukha (upward) simultaneously. Without both, only Tamo Guna increases – Jnanam and Moksha cannot be attained.

## Key Concepts Glossary

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**Antarmukham:** The inward turn; directing the mind, awareness, and Prana back toward their source within.

**Bahirmukham:** The outward turn; the normal waking state in which the mind and senses flow outward toward the external world.

**Urdhvamukham:** The upward-facing awareness; the direction in which the Prana must travel — toward the crown (Brahmarandhra) — for true realisation.

**Adhomukham:** The downward-facing direction; the state of deep sleep, where awareness is inward but sunken downward, producing rest but not Jnanam.

**Jnana Shakti:** The force of Knowledge; the inner intelligence that moves through the Nadis and constitutes the true Prana.

**Prana:** The life force within; distinct from atmospheric oxygen, it is the Jnana Shakti that animates the body and mind. Its quantity determines the measure of one's Knowledge.

**Prana Vayu:** The vital breath or oxygen in the atmosphere; an inorganic gas that catalyses blood circulation and supports the movement of inner Prana, but is not Prana itself.

**Ucchhvasa:** The exhalation; the outward-moving breath. In true Pranayama, the Prana that rises with the exhalation is what is extended upward.

**Nishvasa:** The inhalation; the inward-moving breath. Biologically, exhalation is longer than inhalation in all living beings.

**Pranayama:** Prana + Ayama: the extension or lengthening of the upward-moving Prana through inner practice. Not a nostril-blocking breathing exercise, but an internal energetic extension.

**Sushumna Nadi:** The central subtle energy channel running along the spinal column; the path through which the Prana must travel to reach the Atman.

**Ida and Pingala Nadis:** The two subsidiary subtle channels (left and right of the Sushumna); associated with the lunar (cooling) and solar (heating) energies. In Samadhi, the Prana withdraws from these and enters the Sushumna.

**Triveni Sangama:** The sacred confluence of three rivers (symbolically: Ida, Pingala, Sushumna); the point where Prana merges with the Atman at the Bhrumadhya.

**Bhrumadhya:** The midpoint between the eyebrows; the Ajna Chakra or third eye centre; the Atma-sthana (seat of the Self); also referred to as 'Nasikaagram' in the Bhagavad Gita.

**Brahmarandhra:** The crown chakra; the topmost energy centre at the crown of the head; the final destination of the Prana in its ascent through the Sushumna.

**Samadhi:** The state of deep meditative absorption in which the external breath ceases, the Prana merges into the Atman, and ordinary body-consciousness is transcended.

**Gharshana:** Friction; the internal yogic force generated when the Prana is driven upward through the Sushumna, creating heat that rises to the Bhrumadhya.

**Divya Prakasham:** The divine light; the inner luminosity perceived at the Bhrumadhya when the Prana reaches its destination through correct Pranayama practice.

**Tamo Guna / Tamas:** The quality of dullness, inertia, and darkness; increased by incorrect meditation posture (head bowed, neck tilted). Cannot lead to Jnanam or Moksha.

**Gurumukhata Upadesa:** Direct face-to-face teaching from the Guru; essential for understanding the correct method of Pranayama — books and descriptions alone are insufficient.

## Reflective Questions & Answers

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**Q1. What is the difference between Antarmukham and simply closing your eyes and going quiet?**

A: Simply closing your eyes and becoming quiet may produce some inwardness, but it does not constitute true Antarmukham. True Antarmukham requires not just turning away from external stimuli, but actively directing the Prana — the Jnana Shakti — back toward its source within, while simultaneously maintaining the Urdhvamukha (upward-facing) direction. Without this upward orientation, the practice only produces Tamas — a drowsy, downward inwardness — as experienced in deep sleep. Antarmukham without Urdhvamukham is incomplete.

**Q2. The chapter says we are Antarmukha in deep sleep. If so, why don't we attain Jnanam during sleep?**

A: In deep sleep, we are Antarmukha but Adhomukha — inward but downward-facing. Awareness has withdrawn from the external world (Antarmukham) but has sunk downward, not risen upward. Since the Prana has not ascended through the Sushumna toward the Brahmarandhra, the Jnana Shakti remains diffuse and unrealised. True Jnanam requires Antarmukham plus Urdhvamukham — inward and upward simultaneously. Sleep gives inward rest; Yoga gives inward Illumination.

**Q3. Why does the text so strongly emphasise that Prana is NOT the same as oxygen?**

A: This distinction is crucial for understanding what Pranayama actually develops. If Prana were simply oxygen, then deep breathing exercises or ventilators would be spiritually meaningful — but they are not. Oxygen is an inorganic, lifeless gas that can be stored in cylinders. Prana is the living Jnana Shakti — the intelligent life-force that animates consciousness. Oxygen supports blood circulation, which in turn supports the movement of inner Prana — but when inner Prana is exhausted, no amount of oxygen can restore life or consciousness. Recognising this distinction directs the seeker toward inner cultivation rather than external technique.

**Q4. What exactly is 'Ayama' in Pranayama, and how does it differ from ordinary deep breathing?**

A: Ayama means extension or lengthening. In Pranayama, it specifically refers to extending the upward-moving Prana (Ucchhvasa Prana) further upward through the Sushumna — beyond its ordinary range. In ordinary deep breathing, oxygen intake increases and CO<sub>2</sub> is expelled more efficiently — a physical benefit. But in true Pranayama, the inner Jnana Shakti is extended upward through internal effort and concentration, creating Gharshana (internal friction and heat) that progressively purifies the Nadis and elevates consciousness toward the Bhromadhya. One is physical; the other is subtle and energetic.

**Q5. What happens at the Triveni Sangama, and why is it called a 'sacred confluence'?**

A: The Triveni Sangama is the point where the three subtle Nadis — Ida, Pingala, and Sushumna — converge. Ida (the left channel, lunar) and Pingala (the right channel, solar) normally carry the Prana alternately, creating the ordinary breathing rhythm. Through correct Pranayama, the Prana withdraws from both Ida and Pingala and enters the Sushumna — the central channel. When these three streams merge, the ordinary breath ceases and the Prana moves toward the Atman. It is called 'sacred' because this convergence

is the doorway to Samadhi. The external metaphor is the confluence of three sacred rivers (as at Prayag in India).

**Q6. The Bhagavad Gita says to gaze at 'Nasikaagram' — commonly translated as 'the tip of the nose.' Why does this text say it means the Bhrumadhya?**

A: The word Nasikaagram in Sanskrit means 'the beginning (agra) of the nose (nasika)' — not the tip, but the root or origin of the nose. The nose begins at the Bhrumadhya — the midpoint between the eyebrows, known as the Ajna Chakra or third eye centre. This is the Atma-sthana — the seat of the Self. Sri Krishna's instruction is therefore not to fix one's gaze on the physical nose-tip (which would be cross-eyed and physically straining), but to direct the inner gaze and Prana toward the Bhrumadhya — the true Nasikaagram. Practitioners who misunderstand this cannot achieve the full result of the practice.

**Q7. Why does the text warn against tilting the head or bowing the neck during meditation?**

A: The correct posture — body, neck, and head in one straight line — is not merely an ergonomic preference. It is the physical alignment required for the Sushumna channel to remain open and unobstructed for the upward flow of Prana. When the head is tilted or the neck is bent, the Sushumna is kinked, preventing the Prana from rising freely toward the Brahmarandhra. The result is that the awareness turns inward (Antarmukha) but sinks downward (Adhomukha), increasing Tamas. The straight spine is not optional — it is the anatomical prerequisite for Urdhvamukha practice.

**Q8. If Samadhi means the breath ceases, does that mean the person dies? How are they still alive?**

A: No — Samadhi is not death, though it superficially resembles it. In death, the inner Prana leaves the body permanently. In Samadhi, the Prana does not leave — it dissolves inward and upward, merging into the Atman within the Brahmarandhra. The Prana remains alive inside the body in a subtler, more concentrated form. External breathing — the exchange with atmospheric oxygen — may cease because the connection between inner Prana and outer air temporarily dissolves. This is precisely why the Upanishad says: 'Na tasya prana utkramanti, atraiva samavaliyante' — 'For the Yogi, the Pranas do not leave; they merge within.' Sri Swami Shivananda's Samadhi body showing blood flow after apparent death was direct proof of this.

**Q9. The chapter says Pranayama cannot be fully understood without Guru Mukhata Upadesa — direct teaching from the Guru. Why is this so important for a physical technique?**

A: Pranayama is not truly a physical technique — it is a subtle energetic practice. The Prana being guided is not the breath you can see and measure; it is the Jnana Shakti moving through channels so fine they cannot be observed externally. The Guru's role is not merely to describe the mechanics but to transmit the living energetic experience of what correct Pranayama feels like — the actual sensation of Prana moving through Sushumna, the recognition of the Gharshana heat, the perception of the Divya Prakasham at the Bhrumadhya. Without this living transmission, a seeker can practise for decades with correct intellectual understanding and still miss the essence.

**Q10. What is the relationship between Antarmukham and liberation (Moksha)?**

A: Antarmukham is the prerequisite direction for liberation, but it is insufficient alone. The complete requirement is Antarmukha plus Urdhvamukha — the mind must turn inward and upward simultaneously. When the Prana is successfully guided upward through the Sushumna to the Brahmarandhra, the Jnana Shakti reaches its source. At that point, the

Prana merges with the Atman, external breath ceases, and Samadhi occurs. In that state, the individual consciousness (Jiva) directly experiences its identity with the Supreme (Brahman). Sustained and stabilised, this is Moksha — the permanent dissolution of the sense of separation. All other practices that lack this directional precision only develop Tamo Guna and cannot reach this ultimate goal.

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