

Breathing sounds

Breath and sound go together from the beginning of our lives, with the wail of the new born child. All vocal sound is produced in conjunction with an inhale or exhale of breath. A different emotional quality can be felt in each. Groans, shouts, sighs are usually expressed as we exhale. On an indrawn breath we may gasp as in a moment of fear. We may hold our breath or become motionless.

(From *Moves* by Katya Bloom and Rosa Shreeves, p100)

Breath, Sound and Posture

The importance to health is not the amount of oxygen taken into the lungs, but the amount and extent of *gas exchange* made in the muscle cells of the body. Therefore the number of muscles employed is more important than the amount of air inspired...(p259)

- The exchange of gases can be described as 'internal breathing'
- The exchange of gases is made on the out breath
- The out breath is prolonged when sound is being produced

Internal breathing is important, as it is the phase of breathing to which we can voluntarily bring greatest aid. *This can be done by a better balance of bones, by the freeing of more muscles from 'holding', thereby allowing them to act as an accompaniment in breathing.* In other words we should breathe all over! (p259)

...we find that the structure of the mechanism for speech and breathing serves also...as a part of the *tensile posture mechanism* of the entire body. (p261)

(From *The Thinking Body*, by Mabel E Todd)

The Use of Sound in Pranayama

Sound involves breathing, and is therefore a natural adjunct to the purification process of pranayama. Chanting is extremely powerful in bringing about change and good health. It focuses the mind, elicits internal awareness, and regulates the breath.

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Sound produces a different vibration from that of normal breathing. Various sounds produce their own unique vibrations depending on which parts of the body they use. This is why sound is effective in focusing your mind. In focusing on these sensations, you may experience a new awareness of your diaphragm or abdominal area.

(From *Yoga for Body, Breath and Mind* by AG Mohan p180)

AUM

This Sanskrit word is one of the oldest sounds or vibrations used for prayer or meditation. The root sound of the vowel means wholeness and completion in other languages besides Sanskrit (Omega in Greek, for example). When pronounced correctly the sound is said to encompass all known vowel sounds and to be the vibration of creation.

(From *Yoga* by Mary Stewart, p91)

If we analyse OM as it is written in Sanskrit, we see that it is made up of A, U, M, and a symbol representing resonance. So OM has four aspects. The first is the A, a sound that comes from the belly, is formed in the open throat, and is voiced with the mouth open. As with many alphabets, A is the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet. The second aspect is the U, a sound that is formed in the middle of the mouth. The mouth is not as wide open as it is for sounding the A. With the third sound, M, the mouth closes. The sound rises to the nasal passages, from where the resonance, the fourth aspect of OM, issues forth.

U stands for continuity and connection, and M is the final consonant in the Sanskrit alphabet. So getting from A to M through U represents everything that can be expressed in letters and words...Following M, the sound carries on a while. This sound has no alphabetical symbol to represent it. We can say therefore that [OM] is not only that which can be explained in words, but also that which cannot be explained in words.

(From *The Heart of Yoga* by TKV Desikachar p130)

28. It should be repeated and its essence realized.

29. Then the mind will turn inward and the obstacles that stand in the way of progress will disappear.

(From *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* trans Alistair Shearer p94)