



Figure 25: A sick or restless person disperses prāṇa beyond the body (1) because there are blocks hindering flow of prāṇa within. A peaceful, healthy person keeps more prāṇa within the body (2).

our breath influences our state of mind and vice versa. In yoga we are trying to make use of these connections so that prāṇa concentrates and can freely flow within us.

Various sources call prāṇa the friend of the puruṣa (consciousness) and see in the flow of prāṇa nothing but the working of the puruṣa. If we remember how the degree of clarity created by the power of the puruṣa within us is directly linked to our state of mind, then a close connection between our mind and prāṇa is obvious.

Prāṇa can be understood as the expression of puruṣa, but it is to be found both inside and outside the body. See figure 25. The more content a person is and the better he or she feels, the more prāṇa is inside. The more disturbed a person is, the more prāṇa is dissipated and lost. One definition of the word yogi is "one whose prāṇa is all within his body." In prāṇāyāma we want to reduce the amount of prāṇa outside the body until there is none leaking out.

Whatever happens in the mind influences the breath; the breath becomes quicker when we are excited and deeper and quieter when we relax. In order to influence our prāṇa we must be able to influence the mind. Our actions often disturb the mind, causing prāṇa to exude from the body. Through daily prāṇāyāma practice we reverse this process, as a change in the breathing pattern influences the mind.

The idea of prāṇa existing within or beyond the body can be understood as a symbol for our state of mind. When the mind is as clear as transparent glass there is nothing that could disturb the body; there is no rubbish lying about. On the other hand, if we notice hesitancy, discontent, fear of doing something because it might be inappropriate, and so forth, we can assume that there are blockages in the system. These blockages do not just occur in the physical body; they exist even more in the mind, in consciousness. Every kind of rubbish