

Concept Paper

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[Krishnamurthy Ramakrishnan](#)*

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Pranayama and Bhrigu Valli: Exploring the Connection – A Concept

Pranayama as the Harmonising Agent between the Sheaths Described in Bhrigu Valli

Krishnamurthy Ramakrishnan

Independent Researcher; ramsabi@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper explores the connection between Bhrigu Valli of the Taittiriya Upanishad and Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtras, with a particular focus on Prāṇāyāma as a harmonizing agent between the sheaths (Kośas) described in Bhrigu Valli. The Yoga Sūtras define yoga as the cessation of mental modifications (citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ), while Bhrigu Valli outlines a progressive inquiry into reality through five layers of existence, ultimately concluding in ānanda (bliss) as the essence of Brahman. The paper examines Citta within the framework of Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtras and reinterprets its components through an information-processing analogy. By integrating insights from both texts, this study highlights how Prāṇāyāma serves as a critical bridge between the *Prāṇamaya Kośa (Sheath of Vital Energy)*, *Anamaya Kośa (physical body)* and the more **subtle cognitive and intellectual layers (Manomaya and Vijñānamaya Kośas)**. The cyclic reinforcement of physiological and mental stability through Prāṇāyāma is discussed, along with its documented therapeutic effects on cognition and bodily functions. This paper ultimately positions Prāṇāyāma as a key mechanism for aligning the physical and mental dimensions of human existence, contributing to both yogic and Vedāntic goals of self-realization.

Keywords: Pranayama; Bhrigu Valli; Upanishad; Taittiriya Upanishad; physiological functions; cognitive functions

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1. Introduction

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are a compendium of 125 or 126 aphorisms (depending on the specific school of philosophy). The Yoga Sutras have 4 "Books" or Chapters:

- Samadhi Pada – Focuses on practice and non-attachment
- Sadhana Pada – Prescribes eight practices
- Vibhuti Pada – Unleashing the Power of Consciousness
- Kaivalya Pada – Complete disentanglement of consciousness from the mind and matter, resulting in total freedom

The literal meaning of "Sutra" in Sanskrit is "thread". The Sutras are very brief and concise and permit a practitioner to follow the "thread" according to their own predilections. There is no consensus about the "author" or on when the Sutras were written, but for the purposes of this concept paper, these are not relevant. Pranayama is described in the third book – Sadhana Pada, Verse 2.49

Bhrigu Valli is the third "Valli" of Taittiriya Upanishad. Valli" means a "creeper" or "vine-like climbing plant" in Sanskrit, and refers to a specific chapter within the Taittiriya Upanishad, where each chapter is called a Valli, signifying a section that is connected to the main text like a vine to a tree. It describes five sheaths (*Kośas*) of the human body, from physical to subtle and guides self-inquiry into reality, concluding in *Ānanda* (Bliss) as Brahman's essence. This text reveals a dimension beyond body and mind, highlighting higher consciousness.

This paper explores Pranayama, a breath regulation practice described in the Yoga Sutras and its role in harmonizing and balancing four of the sheaths described in Bhrigu Valli.

2. Main Concepts

2.1. Bhrigu Valli¹

2.1.1. Four Sheaths

Annamaya Kośa (Sheath of Food/Physical Body): This is the outermost layer, representing the material body sustained by food.

Prāṇamaya Kośa (Sheath of Vital Energy): This layer consists of prāṇa (life force), responsible for physiological functions like breath, circulation, and digestion.

Manomaya Kośa (Sheath of Mind and Emotions): This sheath governs thoughts, emotions, and sensory perception, shaping one's identity and experiences. It is restless and influenced by external stimuli.

Vijñānamaya Kośa (Sheath of Intellect and Discrimination): This is the layer of higher knowledge, discernment, and self-awareness, allowing for rational understanding.

2.2. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras

2.2.1. What Is Yoga?

Patanjali, in just four Sanskrit words, both defines the term yoga and states its objective in Samadhi Pada.

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः ॥ १.२ ॥

yogaś cittavṛttinirodhaḥ || 1.2 ||

yogaḥ—yoga. citta—of the mind, mental. vṛtti—of the modifications, changes, various forms.

nirodhaḥ—restraint.

Yoga is the restraint of mental modifications.

Citta: Citta is referred to as "consciousness" or "mind" or mindstuff².

To eliminate ambiguity, we will avoid Sanskrit Terms and use English words.

We will use the analogy of an information processing system to define the terms we will use.

Mind Stuff comprises of four components of which we will refer to two in this paper:

A Controller (*Manas*):

Receives external stimuli through the Gnanendriyas (Sanskrit *ज्ञानेन्द्रिय*) - five sense organs of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch.

Initiates actions when directed and carries them out through the Karmendriyas (Sanskrit *कर्मेन्द्रिय*) five organs of action – mouth, hands, legs, organs of excretion and organs of reproduction.

A Processor (*Buddhi*):

Processes the inputs received from the Controller and directs the Controller to initiate action when necessary.

3. Pranayama's Role

The beneficial effects of Pranayama on physiological and cognitive functions have been researched and documented.^{3 4 5}

Bhriḡu Valli	Yoga Sutras - Mind Stuff
Annamaya Kośa (Sheath of Food/Physical Body): This is the outermost layer, representing the material body sustained by food.	The organs of sense and action
Prāṇamaya Kośa (Sheath of Vital Energy): This layer consists of Prāṇa (life force), responsible for physiological functions like breath, circulation, and digestion.	Yoga Sutras prescribe the practice of Pranayama. Pranayama regulates the Prāṇamaya Kośa's ensuring efficient physiological functions of the Annamaya Kośa. The efficient functioning of human physiology is inextricably entwined with the functions of mind and intellect - <i>Mens sana in corpore sano</i> . By Regulating the Prāṇamaya Kośa by consistent practice of Pranayama, results in a perfect balance between the three other sheaths.
Manomaya Kośa (Sheath of Mind and Emotions): This sheath governs thoughts, emotions, and sensory perception, shaping one's identity and experiences. It is restless and influenced by external stimuli.	The Controller
Vijñānamaya Kośa (Sheath of Intellect and Discrimination): This is the layer of higher knowledge, discernment, and self-awareness, allowing for rational understanding.	The Processor

4. Conclusion

Preliminary research has indicated that Pranayama has beneficial effects on the human body's physiological and cognitive functions. This paper has conceptualised a hitherto unexplored connection between Pranayama and four sheaths described in Bhrigu Valli. This concept provides new avenues for further research into the effects of Pranayama on each of the sheaths described in Bhrigu Valli, leading to a better understanding of how pranayama harmonises the gross body with the subtler elements of the mind leading to a cyclic reinforcement process that significantly enhances the body's physiological and cognitive functions.

Disclosure: The draft abstract for this paper was produced using ChatGPT AI.

Notes

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