

# 10. Role of breath and prana in physical and energetic alignment

WHERE CLASSICAL WISDOM MEETS INTELLIGENT LEARNING

## Breath & Prāṇa in Kalari Uzhichil

How Conscious Respiration Shapes Physical and Energetic Alignment

#### 1 · Breath—The Visible Edge of Prāṇa

Kalari theory treats **breath** (śvāsa) as the audible, measurable wave of a deeper current called **prāṇa**. While air carries oxygen, prāṇa conveys the subtler charge that animates tissues, coordinates nerve signals, and stabilises the mind. Because a practitioner can alter breath at will, it offers the most direct gateway for steering both the **mechanical body** and the **energetic grid** during Uzhichil.

#### 2 · Mechanical Influence of Breath on Posture

Inhalation expands the rib cage, lifts the thoracic spine, and lengthens the lumbar curve; exhalation releases abdominal pressure, allowing the pelvis to settle. When a client is cued to **exhale during deep pressure**, fascial resistance drops by up to 15 %, enabling safer, deeper strokes without triggering the stretch-reflex. Conversely, intentional **inhalation during traction** (e.g., arm or leg pulls) recruits the diaphragm and pelvic floor, creating an internal brace that protects joint capsules.

# 3 · Prāṇic Dynamics—Five Primary Vāyus

Upaniṣadic anatomy divides prāṇa into five functional "winds" (**prāṇa, apāna, samāna, udāna, vyāna**). Each responds to specific breath cues:

- **Prāṇa Vāyu** (chest, inspiratory drive) balanced by smooth nasal inhalations.
- Apāna Vāyu (pelvis, eliminatory force) strengthened by full exhalations and gentle abdominal engagement.
- Samāna Vāyu (navel, digestive fire) harmonised when inhale and exhale lengths are equal.
- Udāna Vāyu (throat, upward lift) awakened through brief breath retentions after inhale.
- **Vyāna Vāyu** (whole body circulation) optimised by steady rhythmic breathing maintained throughout the session.

During Uzhichil, therapists time pressure or holds to activate the vāyu that supports the therapeutic goal—for example, stimulating **samāna** when clockwise strokes around the navel aim to boost agni and tissue metabolism.

# ${f 4}\cdot{f Synchrony}$ Between Therapist and Client

Experienced **gurukkals** breathe audibly so the client's nervous system entrains to their tempo. A common pattern is **4-second inhale, 6-second exhale**, fostering parasympathetic dominance. The therapist initiates pressure at the start of the client's exhale—when intrathoracic pressure falls and venous return peaks—thereby enhancing lymphatic drainage and marma responsiveness.

#### 5 · Breath Strategies for Dosha Imbalances

• **Vāta excess** (irregular breath, anxiety): Lengthen exhalations, add soft humming; warm oil strokes follow the calming rhythm.

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- Pitta excess (sharp breath, heat): Insert short cooling pauses after exhale; strokes remain even and moderate.
- Kapha excess (slow breath, heaviness): Encourage slightly forceful inhales through both nostrils; brisk upward strokes emulate the invigorating tide.

#### 6 · Pre- and Post-Session Breathing Routines

- Before massage 3 minutes of Nāḍī-śodhana clears lḍā-Pingalā channels, priming symmetrical energy flow.
- After massage 5 deep belly breaths supine, palms on lower ribs, help the body register new fascial length and energetic clarity, sealing therapeutic gains.

### **Summary Tables**

Breath Phase M		lusculo-skeletal Effect		Prāṇa Vāyu Stimulated		Optimal Uzhichil Action
Nasal <b>Inhale</b>	Thoracic lift, spinal extension			Prāṇa + U	dāna	Gentle traction or opening strokes
Soft <b>Exhale</b>	Soft <b>Exhale</b> Fascial softening, joint decompression					Deep pressure, marma holds
Equal In / Ex	Core stability, rib-pelvis coheren			ence Samāna		Rhythmic mid-body glides
Rhythmic Cycle Uniform tissue perfusion			Vyāna		07	Long foot sweeps, whole-body integration
Prāṇa Vāyu	Prāṇa Vāyu Location / Function		Breath Cue		Therap	eutic Target
Prāṇa	Heart-lung axis / intake		Smooth inhale		Chest release	e, emotional calm
Apāna	Pelvis / elimination, grounding Comple			exhale	le Low-back pain, sciatic relief	
Samāna	Navel / assimi	Equal inhale-exhale Digestive stir		Digestive stir	mulation, core heat	
Udāna	Throat, head / speech, growth Brief inhale retention Posture uplift, mental clarity					
Vyāna	Whole body / circulation Sustain			ed rhythm Edema reduct		tion, tissue repair
Therapist ↔ Client Matrix Therapist Breath Expected Client Response Resulting Stroke Character						
Grounding start Deep belly ex			nale Mirrors exhale, shoulders drop			Slow oil spreading
Core mobilise E		Even in/out Breath evens, abdomen warms			s Circular navel work	
Heat disperse		Pause after exhale Coolir		ng sigh, face relaxes		Moderate glides, less friction
Finish & integrate		Soft silent inhale Quiet		mind, subtle warmth		Light still-hold at sternum

# **Key Points for Self-Study**

- 1. Breath guides both pressure and pace—listen for client respiration before every stroke.
- 2. Five vāyus give a fine-tuning dial: match stroke location and breath cue to the vayu you wish to balance.
- 3. Synchrony equals safety: pressing on exhale avoids arterial back-pressure and maximises lymph flow.
- 4. Retain, then release: a brief, comfortable hold of breath after inhale (for Udāna) or exhale (for Apāna) magnifies energetic effect without straining.
- 5. Conclude in stillness: two or three silent breaths while the therapist's palms rest lightly consolidate both structural and prāṇic realignment.

By mastering these respiratory nuances, the Kalari practitioner transforms Uzhichil from a sequence of mechanical strokes into a rhythmic dialogue where air becomes energy and energy becomes embodied balance.

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